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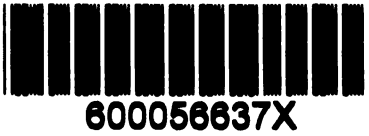
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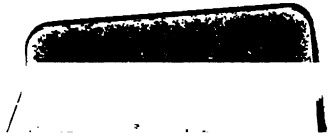

RUMOUR.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"CHARLES AUCHESTER," "COUNTERPARTS,"

&c. &c.

"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad Rumour lies:
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As He pronounces lastly, on each deed,
Of so much fame in Heaven, expect thy meed."

LYCIDAS

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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RUMOUR.

CHAPTER I.

Of the fatal grief she had caused, how far was Geraldine actually guilty? Stranger than all the schemes proven by the schoolman and visioned by the poet, is the philosophy of Sin; its laws and phases as truly and fixedly set as its *ends*, in the appointed retribution; yet, just as no man could righteously apportion this, so no human mind can decide upon the kind or degree of man's offence against the great rule harmonising all life, all things, utterly—perfect love to God and man. Well indeed, for one and all, for the strongest and the weakest, the murderer and the liar, with the impatient and the vain—

that man is not the judge, and that only One, seeing not as man sees, can detect the cause minute or mighty, whose effects man only grasps at. Well indeed for all, that if man condemns—from his little experimental knowledge settles and prescribes finite punishment to his brethren who offend against him (even to the violent and premature extinction of mortal life)—the great Father receives the Spirit; and in His hand, which enfolds the universe, is Mercy *infinite* and Judgment only, *fixed.*

One or two of those among men, who may each justly be named an individual character, have fastened on and brought to light great discoveries after intense and patient toil; discoveries of which the greatest as the least, are *temporarily* beneficial only. Nature, violated by disease, has its tortures tranquillised by old wandering mysteries restored to science newly; madness these times is charmed, not scorpion-whipped; idiocy is mechanically elevated, made nearly ornamental, if scarcely useful, in the domestic picture; fresh or forgotten medicines bring antidotes for new or revived symptoms: physical malformation, distortion, deterioration by accident, find in ceaseless inventions and palliatives

every refinement of substitution or relief. Even the sufferings of Children—that host deepening rank by rank backwards, age by age into the old Time before us, which first crowned Innocence with martyrdom—are beginning, only beginning—(men are too grown-up to comprehend them quickly)—to be looked into; the account may some day be clearly made out, and settled. It is said that the progress of moral improvement and spiritual direction upwards, is equally on the advance. This is impossible; man as a race is too selfish, his health of body and mind shut out the future of death, shut in the spiritual life; time and the necessary alternations of Work and Passion are too pre-occupying. Then of all the thousands given up, as they conscientiously imagine, to the instruction and elevation of their kind, only one or two in every thousand, possess great hearts and teeming minds in bodies at once strong and sympathetic sufficiently, to influence as a *reality*, the soul. Certainly, the vigilance of the many who from protected birth, restrained habit, lack of temptation, have a character intact before the world, is a valuable agent to protect limited society from general revolution; yet, crime prevented in its effect annihilates not the

germ of disposition which would have ripened, but for repression, into crime; just as not every open sin committed is presumptive of a nature recklessly turned from God. In many hearts clothed in white before the world, His spirit reads black hatred, burning jealousy more ruthless than the flames, and cruelty "as crimson," redder than spilled blood. In many a soul whose body has forfeited innocence, His eye detects the spark that, after Expiation, shall blend with His light some future, for an eternal day.

It is fashion, and has longer held than most, to assert that want of training for the character, and want of care over the feelings as they flower from instinct, is the cause of that common first, sometimes final, failure in life—a disappointed and disappointing youth. But the majority of facts is not on this ground of assertion, though the reverse one is so seldom considered that *facts* are not accepted from its point of view at all. Yet it is a truth, that the instances of success and failure are equal on either side. A child placed and bidden to keep in the right paths by wrong persons—that is, by persons whose secret lives are not governed by right—goes almost inevitably wrong; so it happens that children of false

religionists are ever faithless, errant, desultory, or dissipated. Those again, untaught, uncared for, unchecked, who feel and act exactly as instinct directs in infancy, and passion in youth, take just the same wide, thorny, trackless paths across the desert of the world, fall as often into snares by the way, and ensnare as many others. There are in each case exceptions; God has dropped living testimony of his existence in rare natures too pure for wrong, as he has also of his love in loving hearts, too full of charity's fresh sweetness to hold or feel the sting of hatred; and of his beauty in countenances, which reflect it on earth as his angels do in heaven. But with these few, if story tampers, then is it denied the remotest resemblance to Truth.

Geraldine had been trained with constant care, watched with unrelenting vigilance; her mind adorned by culture, and her frame by the grace with which culture crowns development. Propriety and orthodoxy were the guardian dragons of her youth's paradise. Obedience enjoined was also enforced, as long and as far as human agency could influence or threaten. Yet, as a child, she read forbidden books, disobeyed orders that were wise, because in their very list were

included many more that were foolish. Generous through all her waywardness, there was not a particle of what is meant by virtue in her goodness; virtue is goodness protesting, fighting actively, against evil, unsubdued by antagonism of person or of principle. Sweet-tempered, because never thwarted—for her self-indulgences were secret and unsuspected—she was at the same time noble, because nobility became her blood, her circumstances and her pride; unworldly, *because* unworldly—no merit in natural breeding conserving her from vulgar taint. And at the first thrust in life's warfare against her positive contentment, her pure spiritual selfishness, she not only failed—she fell at once.

And he, who subtly as the arch-tempter, armed and urged the thrusting chance against her, might at first sight seem as much to blame as she was to be pitied. Yet it was not so. He, wild as the desert animal or bird no man has ever tracked or netted, who had been unrecognised as he grew by any being older than himself or wiser, as a brother; he, whose gratitude for the only kindness he had realised, had merged through passion into ingratitude the worst and cruellest. Even this boy was as little proper to be cursed as

Geraldine. Both how deeply, fatally to blame, yet who should blame them; who knew how, if indeed worthy, to find fault? Only the single person who might have been justified in casting at them a stone, stood still aloof, and plucked none up.

Mysterious, and yet certain are the processes of the soul's deterioration, facts wrought deep in darkness, as those of the soul's purification are wrought open to the light of God; yet each as needful to the other, and the end consistent, if unseen beyond this life; and precious to heaven must be those souls reclaimed who are left not to the doom of their own devices, the calm of a false life, the luxury of those who receive in this world their portion.

Luck, good or bad; the success which crowns desire for some, or the disappointment wrenching hope from others, is a term derived from man's tendency as a mortal, to dwell on a point—one particle of the perfect and rounded destiny, of which the incidents of luck, whether prosperous or misfortunate, are merely successive points. Thus, if a man has a successful passion, a wish fulfilled, nay, but a whim gratified, he will call himself fortunate, looking neither back at the

weary longing, nor forward to dead indifference. Just so he will wring his hands as in the doom of despair, should the single passion be baulked, the wish unanswered, the whim ungranted, never contemplating the whole at once, life stretching from first breath to eternity's edge; which aspect of the being is impossible, save for the sage in the lucid mirror of his full experience, and the departing spirit which views all the restless past in peace, from the calm brink of death.

In neither of these frames, from no point of contemplation, did Geraldi behold his triumph. Yet it covered him with glory in his own esteem, like a purple robe over a coat of lustrous armour. For just as the temporary downfal of one he chose to consider, because he detested him, an enemy, was for himself an actual, if not an obvious, triumph, so his false and unallowable zeal on behalf of his cousin, in his own eyes, seemed honourable chivalry. Self-possessed all through his dreamed design, cool in his daring, herein consisted the danger for her—his control over all except his passion, and that only secretly indulged, no longer as an aspiration, but as an intention, and only now a hope, so far as hope implies fulfilment. Confidence was the set frame

to which the long course of selfish energy had hardened; and in the midst of that unboyish mood—befitting rather the strong man with formed and busy head, and baffled heart—Geraldi saw his passion, intention, and hope, all at once and the same, a triumph. So sure, he could afford, in the slow development of events, to wait —patiently, too, as a woman, or rather as a fox or other subtle animal of prey, for whom only patience will procure a feast. For the same reason it was easy enough for him to continue the manner and mode fraternal towards the hapless Geraldine. Also he was aided here by necessity —neither he nor another mortal could set aside or supersede the reign of sickness, sacred above all other sovereign claims. For long, by a bare pulse-thread, in all opinion but his generated audacity, Geraldine's being in this world hung; and, but for the chance which is a concomitant of existence as long as one sure grain quivers in the life-glass unfallen; but for the consciousness that if he never possessed her living, the one who had done so could never possess her dead; it would seem as though no hope unhallowed, no charm unlawful, could be fulfilled for or given to Geraldi. But it happened not so, nor endured

he the least of all the agonies of terror, not one pang of the travail of suspense. Now and then such phenomena among characters are born, as there are minds created too eccentric to merit the name of genius; and from the moment he had succeeded in blasting, by a final shock—artificial, albeit, as a powder train well-laid—the constancy he had undermined for months, his inward chaos of black despair had lighted up with flames of jealousy, no longer hidden perforce from his own perception, and burned into defiance—disdain; he defied his cousin's Maker as he disdained her master upon earth. Mood which made old races take their stand on facts of Satanic influence direct from the Lord-demon; of possession by inferior devils, superior in dread strength to man, of witch-bewitchment, and wizard-craft. For the true deliverance of man to the powers of evil is that he be delivered up to himself—that he go away out of God's sight wilfully, if not willingly, not that God forsakes him. For there is not a question that when man relies utterly and wholly upon himself alone, his volition is stronger, because more intense and wholly concentrated then—his pride entirely concerned and glorified; he *will* have what he *will*

to happen: if so, right often it does happen, and God interferes not—it is out of sight of his pure eyes.

Geraldi determined that Geraldine should live; and she lived—he not only resolved, but believed it—so it happened. Faith implicit removes mountains; evil is possible to it, if unusual of occurrence, as good; arch-magicians of Egypt taught this truth to Moses. Always, saving in the matter of life and death, this may be said truly. And it is also certain that, as it happened, Geraldine would have lived without his resolution interposed. We but set down the fact that he willed, believed—and his desire and assurance came to pass.

Looking to natural causes after supernatural, instead of the usual succession, it was not only natural but a necessity, she should so far recover. For the possible death-result of her illness, short as dangerous, had been annihilated with the danger suddenly removed; just as but for certain conditions fulfilled, it would have killed her instead. These conditions were such as, if she had happened to be the child of parents unable to fulfil the physician's decrees (fulfilled to the letter for *her*) or obliged to delay her

departure from this climate impregnated with lung-poison; but neither case was hers. Almost common as is the prescription of climate equable and mild for consumptive tendency or disease, these vary in so many forms and have such unexpected phases, that it is no marvel the exceptions among such exiles are those who return, or remain abroad, there cured. In Geraldine's kind of attack, to rally was recovery, unless relapse ensued, which probably would have chanced in this land—mist-cradle of the sea-born fog. And she rallied even before leaving England, though her husband was not near enough to perceive the improvement; though, half-restored already as she was, she cared not to bid him farewell. This, at once the crown and core of her deep offence, she might have been forgiven during the light-headed hallucination consequent upon hemorrhage of the lungs; so long as that endured, a negative excuse, if not actual, might be due to her. But, the crisis overpast; then tended by nurses whose very paid footsteps lulled, whose handling seemed to drop sleep's poppies on the eyelids; by physicians who loomed over the couch by which they were no longer needed, like knowledge and

protection in effigy, breathed on by and nested in luxury like a fairy in the heart of a rose-cup —the potions disguised by perfumes, the pills gilded tasteless—the wines for strengthening, delicate as nectar, the fruits for refreshment like dainties dropped from paradise, with ices hard as snow on mountain summits, and sweet with all the souls of fruit. Not only such enticements to ease, but the sameness of painless convalescence, lightened and varied for Geraldine by a perpetual mild sunshine of homage, an eternal incense of unspoken flattery.

And all through the phases of passive endurance, which make steady restoration like one long indolent holiday, she never faltered from her rash and sudden estimate, her conscience whispered not, it was drugged too deep with selfishness; her judgment could not question, it was blind and dumb. Had she even been left to herself, it seems little likely she would have come to her right mind, much more to her healthful heart, soon and easily—of the spirit's sickness the cure is never sure if sudden, and almost always slow. But the influence of Geraldi—he strong as she was weak, her selfishness single, but his doubly enthralled by self, his character set against all

laws of heaven and honour consciously and willingly, as hers was ignorantly bent—that influence indeed seemed to exist only to seal her doom, and distance to the remotest hour of life, if not for ever, her return to the possession of her right mind and heart.

Geraldi could afford to behave with propriety at present, for the perfecting of the fraud he practised on those he had first deceived. Not one of those he had made miserable or guilty—neither of the twain—had the least suspicion of his design, or that he had any. Albany's imagination was too grand to have made it possible for him to conceive a plan at once so monstrous, and so mean; Geraldine was at this time too self pre-occupied with the romance of her position to contemplate any fixed point or probability in the future at all. Nor stood Geraldi on the list for pardon, of those who do not err wilfully but weakly, who insensibly fall into temptation, driven thither in a whirl of impulse. Calm if not skillful as a surgeon, he was cool as an executioner, not one gleam of compunction crossed his countenance, serenely warped with smiles, none was emitted in secret from his heart; if Geraldine's conscience was drugged, his was scotched

—it could not stir nor sting. There might possibly come an hour in which it should rear its crest in revenge, and pour forth all the venom of its torment to help another torment; but it was yet in the beginning—not seeming near the end. When Geraldine reached her grandmother's house —her old home—it would have been indeed strange had she experienced no dim and moving reminiscences—not compunction for her fault, but natural trouble at the change passed over her with which she charged another—and blamed him bitterly, wildly, in the quick pang that seized her then, and was so quickly spent. First felt then, too, because not till she was established there, were her spirits strong enough to wing her memory; her convalescence was only then complete. The first breath of the embalmed air, the first stately shadow of the marble terrace seen freshly in the sun, the first rustle of the old myrtle thickets, were the remedy, and she responded to it—with it her brain cleared fully, and in the first lucid frame she suffered, still rather in her pride than through her love. Afterwards in her regenerated existence she often enquired of herself where that love of hers lived while her separation from it lasted—during the

suspension of it, when the heart's loss was by the heart unregretted. Love cannot die—it must then have been for the time absorbed into the great principle of love, which governs all things, and there have *rested*, ere it rose again, and purified.

Now it was well for Geraldi's satisfaction that he had made up his mind it would be a long and measured race towards the goal of his desires. For, after her wild appeal and approach to him in her first natural agony, she turned from him as decidedly. Romance and pride ruled her girl's brain between them now; her career fine and poetic in its commencement, was of course at this its climax, sublime. What woman, she considered, ever acted with energy so direct and spirit so exalted? She was accustomed to lie and muse—or as her mind grew stronger, inly comment, on the various modes with which other girls of her age and station had or would have endured the indignity, the disgrace, (if endured), of a second place in a husband's heart; on their spiritless inventions to keep the fact even out of their own sight, because of what they would have to sacrifice, in sacrificing wifehood and worldly consideration. All which, I sacrificed, thought Geraldine, never

reflecting on the fact that she had never cared the least in the world for any worldly advantages, consideration, or any outward claims of wifehood as a woman in society, &c. She certainly shed tears sometimes, just after waking in the morning, when the truth came fresh as light to her, or at night when weariness softened all her sensations; but they were bitter dews, she pressed them back from the beginning, and at last learned to *feel* them without permitting them to fall; for they expressed her natural longing, which pride kept down and would not brook. One only excuse existed for this unnatural repression of nature, the system pursued by Geraldi had been subtle enough to have effect from the beginning, her innocence helped this effect, but most her *blood-affection.*

At the very beginning of her new life in old scenes, she received her first letter from her husband. No need of Geraldi's subtle strong revenge, or the grandmother's small family-spite, to make her consider—in her frame then feel it—cold and cruel, even careless. As she received it, it actually insulted her in her own esteem, for in that moral anarchy of exaggerated sentiments and untempered thoughts, a letter such as

Albany's, whose quiet diction and reserved pain betokened perfect sanity of mind and body, was as useless as it seemed revolting. And yet this letter had a positive effect, besides that which may be named the negative one, of *preventing* its own reply, for of course Geraldine was too proud to answer it, or to write to England at all. Its positive effect however was, that it prompted her to avenge herself rather more dangerously, if she succeeded in her design, than had she merely written violent and haughty letters to her husband which no one else should read.

Through moral anarchy, great ideas are apt to generate in imaginative minds. They even rise, strong at first through passion, and seeming winged to heaven—but flagging, downflung, as all man's mechanism on that aspiring road. For ideas to rise, to endure, and drop their fruit, they must be produced in moral harmony, if not in mental calm. So Geraldine aspired, and fell.

No one will believe that a person of poetic temperament, with the gift of language, will, live without expression in some one form or another. Art is the true expression, though therein so many forms include themselves. Music certainly the highest, albeit words (not poetry) the lowest

and the easiest. Young as she was, Geraldine was not so ignorant that she had not informed herself of every literary whim and fashion, as well as orthodox achievement. She knew, and when at home with her husband had often, to his fond amusement, ridiculed the performances of that singular authoress who, separated from her husband, could not tear herself from the contemplation of marriage, which she made absurd in attempts at sublimating it out of her own personal experiences. Geraldine had mocked, not causelessly, the pages innumerable which she darkened with demon likenesses of him who had sometime been her master in the flesh—the man whom she hated and asserted to have injured her. As in the old-fashioned toy of changeable ladies, she employed his head-piece for an initial to all her characters, whose extravagances and wickednesses, as depicted by herself, she persisted in pinning on him, however unlike him those heroes veritably might be. Scarcely a month after her arrival, Geraldine had arranged a work, in reality suggested by the infatuated lady she had repudiated in her ridicule—out of her young ignorance it sprang vast, glorious, and complete in anticipation. No such book had yet been devised; such

should be read and received by all, in true not false testimony of man's ingratitude and falsehood. The doom of her first book withheld Geraldine in this new mood, no more than the first shot *missing* the wild herd daunts the desert-hunter. *He*—her husband—had alone been to blame for its non-success, or rather for its success not satisfying her. This new work should electrify those stocks and stones the first had not stirred, and *he* should be crushed under its weight of retributive genius. And, as the nerve-spirit was not spent in this clay skeleton for Geraldine, only her physical functions affected, she might have succeeded at least in *finishing* what she ardently began, but for a circumstance, small amidst the myriad proofs of the giant Circumstance's existence, but immense enough to her near perception to crush her experiment into annihilation.

Her grandmother, whose table was of course supplied with choice literary items as well as common ones; just as it was duly spread with inventions to culture and corrupt the palate; never herself did more than dip into book or periodical, poem, or pamphlet; as with her simple Tuscan tastes she only *tasted* French dishes; memen toes of exhausted appetites re-excited and

sustained. Nor was Geraldine a great or steady reader—therein proving that she was not destined for a great or steady luminary of literature. She also dipped into dishes of both kinds—perhaps more vividly perceived their separate flavors. Among them, while her great idea was dawning into morning twilight, from which she prophesied its perfect day—she happened to take up a sewn publication, the review of all reviews. She took it up quite carelessly—as vehemently, passionately, almost desperately, dropped it. Then clutched it freshly, gathered it in her hands, as though it contained a new gospel of promises for a new condition of pain and yearning; or, rather she held it as a maiden her first real love-letter, or one condemned his written reprieve.

It was the *name* that riveted her first—of her own old book, that lost yet *existing* fable of her own young fame; loved still, though with affection most carefully concealed from pride. But now Geraldine read and re-read the superscription; it could not be, yet was. And he who had taken it in hand —spent time upon it—was the one alone to whose notice she had not aspired, deeming it too powerful and high. Even Diamid's literary experience had most led him to the false belief that, if a book were not noticed by Tims Scrannel, its

literary success was incomplete. The pang, which was already stifled from repetition, once more struck through and through her, yet scarcely touched her heart, it pierced her pride. Alas! that it should have come too late for *him*—for *me* to behold him when yet he would have cared for the surprise. Still, pride pierced, was all the more thrillingly sensitive to the fact that all the world yet should read, and wonder. She should be held up to honour in absence—her genius made heroic by its author's sad, romantic fate. Such were the first suggestions of her nature as it then was influenced—next came the curiosity to life, held in check till then by those suggestions. Her eyes fastened on the page—she read.

The first few sentences rang rich as festal yet solemn music; all Scrannel's criticisms opened so. Then came the sketch by the strong, masterly, accustomed hand—no caricature, not a line altered—certainly no injustice to the book's design. Then lucid, logical, thoughtful, but ever calm—the gradual and crushing argument. For he had actually taken pains with it; his intellect had not spared itself in the task. The faults not hinted at, but shown; the beauties

shorn of their ideal mist, down to bare, and sometimes, skeleton sentiment. The eloquence stripped to its fact—precocious wealth and waste of words *not understood.* No one could question the truth or justice of what was proved; there stood the performance which now to the performer's mental vision showed, as to the sensuous eye shows the design of the unskilful draughtsman, its crooked and tremulous lines crossed by the artist's correcting pencil. All this, however, could Geraldine bear patiently, even proudly, for her mind gave not the lie to it in any particular. Not to the verdict annihilating her claim to genius; herein proving, perhaps, that her claim was no false one, for if passion be even—even exaggeratedly prone to pride, certainly true genius is of and in itself inevitably modest. Still, a sort of quiet settled down on her, which an older person, better disciplined, because longer; would have shrunk from in terror—as sign of near despair. She scarcely cared to finish what she read; well for her comfort had she failed to turn the leaf—the last leaf, too, remaining. But as, in all moods approaching (but not yet) despair, there was a biting necessity for more excitement—even more

painful excitement. So she looked on hurriedly. Not twenty lines more belonged to her; they were soon surely read and understood. How then was it that she still held the paper, tighter and tighter, till the clasp seemed clenched—while it rustled as in palsied fingers? Why stole that shadow, which seemed rather of stupefaction than of sorrow, over her clear forehead? And wherefore did her eyes wander wildly and dilated, up and down the page, as though to learn some meaning—whether enchanting or detestable—by heart?

She had dreamed the verdict of false genius final—there was yet another crueller, and falser than the false imputation. Certainly the very final objections, which were less against her book than her own character, had been *hinted* at before by little writers in insignificant reviews, forgotten with the hour. But hinted too vaguely for her to understand their drift. Here there was no hint, but set assertion—by a man of the world who certainly should have studied women—that this woman was a reprobate. Immoral—unvirtuous—tampering with veiled truths. Poor Geraldine! her innocence, rash knowledge—her instinct, vice.

Now, in fact, Tims Scrannel, when that blossom of premature genius dropped before the crude fruit formed, in the very path of his perception, took no heed of it, save as an epicure in letters to remark silently on the annihilation of such a promise—a fruit which when ripe might have given a new flavour to his fastidious taste. Beautiful however, it was, as valueless—that flower which might have turned to fruit—he would as soon have thought of noticing its descent critically as of seriously treating in text a windfall in a neighbour's orchard. Yet, like all vain, sensitive men, he was by no means independent of the many—nay not of the ignorant whom he professed to despise. So when many others—quite enough private persons to constitute the term *the public* — contemplated this bloom dropped too soon from promise, inhaled its odour fresh with youth, and sweet with youngest passion, they deemed it a rare thing, just as some wild flowers are precious in climates where they do not grow, and when even Rumour employed one whisper of all its myriad tongues, to marvel at and enquire the author's name; then it even called for notice by one whose chief notability was that he was *able* as well as willing

to decide all Rumour's questions. But how to notice it? he to whose vivid intellectual instinct his slow heart ever gave the lie, how should he praise? why blame? when either sentence might be a blunder written to be read of all men.

It is amazing how many men of natural ability and erudite experience, are at important moments driven or drawn into the power of women one shade less than fair, one ray less than beautiful, and but one whit wiser than foolish. The beautiful and wise, the queens of physical fairydom, are foiled if they cast forth their gentle and unconscious spells in company with the brazen-fronted, clad with guile.

Tims Scrannel, who would have routed a whole phalanx of lovely and witty women by his sneers alone, and scattered their bright faculties with his angel-demon ogle, was willing to take counsel of Helen Jordan, a person whose brains might have been safely contained in an empty egg-shell, and whose innocence had evaporated in her christening-dews. Now Helen Jordan actually at first believed that "Virgilia"—book of classic name and nature romantic out of all rule and reason—had been written by Albany. She had read and loved his books for the fashion con-

tained and ridiculed in them, just as clowns go to penny Shakspeare-theatres for the fun. As being a person little able to distinguish between things that wholly differed, she was very likely to confound those together that bore to each other a certain resemblance. So her deception was helped out by phrases and manner insensibly imitated from Albany's, in the book. She had a sort of vulgar admiration for his person, as he possessed eyes and hair of the stereotyped heroic tint and darkness. But she cordially—cordially as a being so cold and hollow could—detested Geraldine with her unworldly and impulsive nature—such unworldliness innocently condemned a narrow mundane mind, such impulsion mocked and shamed a passionless and calculating nature. Helen Jordan took some pains to excite Tims Scrannel about Geraldine's authorship. He, looking at himself from his own point of view—too near not to be out of all perspective—deemed himself too lofty and sublime, to busy himself, especially with the antic of premature intelligence. Helen became the more resolved that Geraldine, the married girl, should be plagued and punished for the sake of her own grown woman's hatred. Scrannel, however, bided the

time—not even a woman, too headless and heartless to excite his jealousy, should incite him to expression; he would act, convicted by himself, and the impulses of detestation are as direct as those of love. He hated Albany as the all-seasoned rose hated Geraldine; he had hated her, too, but the hatred had been forced under by the force more irresistible of admiration. And perhaps he hated *him* for the reason Helen hated *her*—the reason also which had drawn the high-experienced and culture-chastened genius to the untempered, inexperienced girl—the purity of both. To wound Albany through his dearest weakness, his vulnerable humanity, was at once a gracious and an honourable course. For, whom spared Albany in his satire? Whom distinguished he as worthy to share his heart save his wife alone? All the world had seen the homage he paid, the love he gave her; he never thrust his tenderness back into his nature, because rude eyes might detect it; it was for her, not them, and if they questioned it, it might at least teach them, Love, not "understanding," is the most precious treasure of the wise. So, in due course, Albany was deeply pained by a judgment of his wife, which,

had she been in her right place by his side, he would only have laughed at with her; now the heart wound stanched, but not healed, opened fresh to the insidious chill, and throbbed anew. Who knows not the torture of an open wound in winter? Desolate had he been, and dry as winter until then—nor had the cold lacked either —still, as time breathed on the pain, *in* time, with all wounds, it healed, and then *that* pain which lay not lowest, but at the surface, was forgotten, as a generous man forgets the wrongs he only felt as woes. But it was not so with Geraldine; still pure, if not faultless—unfallen, if changed for evil. All the graceful sneers, the satire sheathed in brilliant eloquence, the strong experience which crushed—as the former had scattered—her delicate-winged ideas, had failed to wound her vitally, though they pinched her as if skin-deep—for never was she a moment vain. But the unfaltering and awful accusation of immorality—of rash tampering with sacred truths! from the moment she read it—clearly comprehending its full force—she doomed herself. Was it possible she was then unknown to herself till then—such as a thousand others—shameless, forlorn in the *shadowlessness* of

vanished virtue? The magnitude of the charge prevented her from testing it; as well could a rock-clung limpet resist and fling from itself a rock hurled down upon it to crush it. She could but drearily and pitiably accept the sentence she had no power or knowledge how to reverse, and retire not only from fame but from a dearer reputation—rest buried under the charge till death.

Yet, unhappy child, she knew not—the shock had been too great to let her realise—how much her singular conduct and rash defection towards her husband, had contributed to remove from a conscience, never over-honourable, the last honourable compunction. Of course had she borne silently, what was actually a real sorrow to a nature like hers, uncompromising—silently—then how proudly—no critic could have connected her history with her mind's invention, or dared to touch upon her conduct.

But the more important result of her new and dread condition was retarded—the time had not then come. For the present, the reading of the poisoned sentence had but envenomed her own opinion of herself, and struck her mute. Never cared she to write again—to expose herself to

charges she could neither resist nor repudiate. Nay, from that hour her genius, frail at the best as a summer butterfly, drooped like one bruised and crushed, its wings could not open—its *impulse* was spent for ever. In truth, the most delicate genius is so easily crushed, that (praise be to Heaven), it is rarer to find existent than the mighty and the strong. For the time then—in one sense for ever—Geraldine was stricken idle. She had never cared for nor followed any feminine pursuit, save poetry and love; these failing her, her hands dropped nerveless in her lap, a mist rose up in her brain and wrapped her faculties from her perception; she went softly in the utter bitterness of her soul.

The pre-adamite warfare between the devil and Jehovah, is a type repeated in every age down to that ebbing at our feet. The principle of evil, at once actual and subtle, tries hard to separate the sons of God from God for Eternity, and sometimes succeeds entirely for *time*. To effect such separation, the demon in every imagined and unimagined form enters the mind of man—for some the trial is fiercer, shorter, and the triumph earlier complete—man's return to the father of his spirit. But while it possesses, it rages in the

soul, sears it, rends from perception of love's soft touch, yells to drown love's delicate eternal music. In such cases all causes seem to favour the enemy of Love, while the struggle lasts events happen which minister to the sovereign evil; so it was with Geraldine. Temptations closed upon her, before she had time or recovered sense to fling one back without acknowledgement. Geraldi did his best, which was his worst, and his blood-influence lent his intentions an irresistible, because so subtle a strength.

But how could Geraldi, the proud boy-pauper, contrive to gain influence permanent and indestructible; did a poor man ever so succeed? For the matter of that, Geraldine, in her listless life, retrieved from convalescence, had one cause for wonder left her; one curious point, a fixed one, even in her aimless reverie. How had Geraldi changed?—for he had altered; what gave him the swing of confidential ease in presence of others, which formerly her freedom of intercourse had alone permitted him? In her long lazy days Geraldine marvelled much. In old times of childish peace she had depended on him for sympathy if not for amusement; his contrasting company was needful to make her vitality

effervesce. She had never done without him, and knew not how to do. But, surely she had him still; who else cared for his presence? Yet he was often, and very often, absent.

Geraldi was at the edge of manhood, when Geraldine, yet lingering a girl, was married; he was now a fresh-formed man. So she realised as a woman since her married separation; till then she had been conscious of a relation brotherly as fond. He meant their relation to alter, in kind or in degree; but while the strong chain slipped over her, she recognised not that a captor's hand had dropped it.

For yet another excuse was hers—she had neither mother nor grandmother in any but a legal sense. The mother, who should be to the child all sympathy, as the mother's mother. Wisdom in experience, had never touched her soul, nor claimed to instruct her heart; her mother existed for society—the present; her grandmother for family—the past. Between two such shadowy supporters, the child and grandchild slipped. True, she should never have forsaken that estate which for a woman supersedes all influences of parentage and ancestry; but she scarcely forsook them as a woman grown,

albeit as a wife. So deprived, or having deprived herself of her natural support, she fell back on her old one, which had never failed her. But her fancy was troubled with the fact, that whether his support remained to her or not, it was for the most part invisible. Geraldi, from the time of his return with her, was for some whole days absent, always part of each day. Whither he went she could not dream, nor what pursuits he had adopted in London, which could be carried forward in Italy. Whether he even went beyond the gardens she could not tell, as she could not search them herself and did not choose to take any person into her confidence. And without his society she languished; of course in a nature like hers such desire could not perpetually languish, but must declare itself. There was no sacrifice of pride to declare such need to him; was he not her own cousin—her own blood? To him had she not been ever kind? So, very soon she stretched out her weak hands to him when, after brief and distantly-conducted visits, he turned to leave the room, and called aloud on him out of her solitude, to remain with her and console her.

Here was the first-fruit of the triumph—her

fingers plucked it for him, and cast it at his feet. To make himself, and to be, needful to her—she who had disdained his need! From that moment she was in his power, for life—he knew that; but who shall say what *is* life? how long the power in which we hold those breathing, by our breath, shall last?

Geraldi, like Agag of old to him who should slay him, came delicately to Geraldine's command. He had refrained just as delicately on the journey; but then she had been too weak to want him absolutely. Now, the heart she had rudely weaned from its natural sustenance, craved the like food—love. Not for the world would Geraldi have startled her away by relapses into his old fierceness—he had actually outgrown them. So, though he was less demonstrative, he gave much more support; and as his form set to its final mould, his mind set also, and was one of those unimaginative, self-reliant, definite ones, wholly without genius or modesty. His opinions, correct or false, all sounded right, because they never faltered. For instance, though he never spoke of Albany of his own accord, it was he who, when she gave him her husband's first letter to read, denounced it with one withering frown, one

blighting word—and decided her without advising —not to answer it. Then the melancholy fear that time assumed, touched her far more than the old black tempest; yet that cloud but for him disguised the black and seething hell of his own thoughts, the rage of his desires beneath them; the suspense necessary half maddened him; but who knows not the craft, the calm of the unproved madman? Such were his.

Then when Geraldine reflected, between her romances—such became his visits—she also wondered exceedingly how he had contrived to achieve the air and even the grace of one habituated to worldly society; and how he managed no longer to be poor. Had he found a gold-mine at which he dug in those long absences? Geraldi actually had money; indeed, from the way he displayed it, in handsful negligently, or dispensed it in domestic largess, she fancied he must be very rich. Truly, what he had, he husbanded well, and the god of evil made it prosper, though it was neither found nor inherited—only earned, and earned for service. Geraldi had, in fact, become a subaltern—he had not talents for a chief, in a theatrical company scarcely superior to a strolling one. And this same office that

paid him his due deserts, also gave him the social air, the grace of costume, the self-possession Geraldine wondered at; though he owed it to his inborn nobility that his stage-breeding was never detected at its source.

Dabblers in one art or calling often pick up the rudiments of another, or others, by the way. So Geraldi found. He had contrived, few and brief as had been his interviews with Rodomant, the true master, to learn from him sufficient to prevent his confounding the true with the false—in art. So he never confided in mock or mimic artists, to his own detriment or despite. Not one of the actors in the troupe he had joined knew his real name or rank; he even passed for one sprung absolutely from the people, and raised to the part he played. The operas were insignificant ones.

The theatre almost entirely patronised by the people and the peasantry—for it was not in the town next his grandmother's house, but in an inferior village, scarcely ever passed through by strangers. Among the audience, he was welcomed most cordially, as an aristocrat in undress will ever be with those he calls and deems his natural detesters—no persons actually so love

and appreciate refined politeness. Geraldi could afford to be polite to them—amidst them he was actually superior, therefore acted as an equal—this equality led to a peculiar, yet natural, result.

One evening he stole into Geraldine's room—in old times he never went to her room, but met her in the gardens. Now he went to her room unasked—yet seemed not intrusive, because he went so seldom. This evening it was little likely she should think him so—she had longed so for his coming, which was never now a certainty till he had come. He looked grand to her vision as he advanced, dilated in the twilight with a golden shadow on his pale dark visage, and the evening fires burning in his brown transparent eyes. Round his statuesque curls, like black carved marble, a triumph seemed to gather, merely from the position of his head, thrown back more proud than merely haughty. Geraldine felt jealous—that triumph had invested him as he entered, she feared it had not brightened with her smiles. Not that he thought of another woman, no suspicious cloud had drifted by his desperate impulse across her imagination, yet so pure. But she feared wildly to lose his love, she gazed upon him with the timid imploring sadness of one who

has a friend—to whom that one is the *only* friend.

"What is it, Geraldine?" he asked, after letting her spend many moments in the vain and thirsting glance. And he laid his cool hand on her forehead gently, where of old his kisses rained like fiery dews—night, morning, noonday —every time.

"Nothing," she faltered, maiden-like.

"But you surprised me. I thought you looked as if you were going to say something."

"I was. Have you taken enough care about me, to wonder where I went so often since we came?"

"Oh, often, often—always!"

"Have you ever wished I was not out—O, Geraldine?" And the palm which pressed her forehead still, glowed suddenly as though it clasped a fiery coal.

"Ah, yes," she answered, sincere in very fervour, and simple yet. "But I thought you perhaps were busy."

"I was, and so shall be; but it was all that I might become more fit to guide and comfort you. One cannot learn too much, and I knew less than little. I have been studying."

"What? I thought you had *done* something, for you have made money, Geraldi."

A smile, too cunning to part the lips, flitted over his. "Yes," he said quietly, "some, and I mean to have more—my dues with those of many thousand men. Geraldine, what would you say to *this?* I am a soldier now."

"A soldier? Oh, how delighted I am! But not surprised. An officer, of course, Geraldi?"

"Oh, of course, an officer."

"In which regiment, Geraldi? Did the duke see you? did you go to him? did he send for you?" The duke was the mild ignorant—futile while absolute—regnant of that province.

"No—the duke did not see me—mine is a higher master, his claims broad as freedom—his kingdom wider than this land. He is crowned with human happiness—his sceptre is plenty, his rule the only secure peace. His name is Liberty."

Geraldine started and stared—she positively did not understand him — his magniloquence charmed, however, as much as it excited her, and that was all he required. He had simply joined the republican cause (whose army was in truth

as vast as it was undisciplined), a natural result of a contempt for all authorities of earth and heaven—a burning and restless youth—a lawless passion—and a will for which the impossible existed not.

CHAPTER II.

THE sickly and chilly spring of Rodomant's life had dissolved with its mists of doubt and hope rainbows, into a summer-time of teeming fervour, and all-creative strength—as such springs sometimes do. An early summer—whose character seemed to have taken from that rare climate its impression—with its brilliant dreamy days, and lucid studious nights. That inauguration of his to the several offices, never attained or held before by a single person at a time, had taken place immediately before his first patroness had read of and commented on it. Yet—it was just as well he knew not, with his simple sensitiveness, this fact—the cluster of incidents, out of which an editor of a continental newspaper

of one day's date, one week in this millennium, had made a constellation of interest for the limited circle of its readers—the facts, related with so profound an interest for such, found no notice whatever in any English paper; there was no room for them, or their claims were not sufficiently consequential.

That inauguration had been a superb small festival—Rodomant considered it a sublime one. No wonder, perhaps, in that court where conservatism—kept calm with almost purple state, the soft magnificence, the drain of prodigality, whose results were like flying dreams of art—both impregnated the hour and the occasion with an excitement that seemed higher than the human. But the fine rite, arranged so artfully after antique precedent, would on the contrary have struck his fine taste as a gilt and velvet pageant; the sword of the order, that should never be unsheathed in battle, as an ignoble toy; the other decorations as tinsel and silken tape; but for the sway of his deep secret, that idealised all, and lit each formal or hollow item with a glory stolen from paradise.

This event had fallen on him with the surprise peculiar to one of ideal brain and heart unspoiled,

when an honour undeserved accrues to him. He felt it undeserved, and it was actually unexpected, for though he had received compliments enough from the prince, he had never lent them any real meaning; and was further ignorant that his marked independence of demeanour had as much to do with the satisfaction he elicited, as had his productive energy, which never failed, flagged, nor refused to follow and fulfil impulse. Never had the prince been so ceaselessly diverted from the exhaustion of his old pleasures, now yielding worse weariness than pain, nor from the hideous thoughts which haunted that black place, his conscience, as spectres are beheld in darkness. The perception of the beautiful was left in him —as in how many of the basest and the hardest —strange argument to crush the sophism some hold, that evil natures are annihilated as beings altogether. For the sense of beauty exists and can exist in the immortal only. And this lovely instinct survived in one for whom all others had sunk beneath the human average—the prince, if gratitude had not decayed in him, would have actually felt gratitude towards Rodomant, when he discovered it was not only blood and rapine whose tragic moods he could depict, but that no

poet-musician had ever drawn upon the same resources for the development of the philosophy of passion in its phases the highest and least terrible—those of love. Cold and loveless indeed was this appreciation—that of the virtuoso with taste refined and rigorous, rendered inexorable by indulgence. He admired Rodomant's works for their consummate art, as he would have applauded a skilful sculpture of one fresh torn from the rack—each strained muscle starting—in repose; the marble agony anatomically correct, the torture of the countenance *reflected*, not imagined.

Those weeks when Rodomant laboured hard for the prince's edification, might have been set down to his account as first lessons in the mockery of devotion—the slavehood of the noble will chained by the wishes or the whims of the evil and unjust. Or they might seem so. But there is only one case in which a proud and self-reliant nature will yield implicit obedience to the rules of one unloved—unserved in heart. Rodomant, in serving the tyrant and the time, misserved not Art; no force, nor fraud, nor promise of all he longed for, would have dragged him to that ground of degradation. Had his own un-

worldly strain of composition been objectionable, or not acceptable there, he would have gone, even if he had plucked out his heart and burned it at the grey convent gates; or the spirit, which gives life to being bound in clay, had given up the ghost, and flown to heaven, on the borders of that land of promise.

But, without doing violence to his artistic honour, he could remain—nay, make himself necessary rather than of consequence; therefore he stayed—and for what guerdon? unguessed by ruler or courtier, even by the person who unconsciously bestowed it. To go back some moments in his history: the unselfishness of love and the selfishness of passion—what word-artist or philosopher shall ever exhaust that theme? The antagonists that in every opposition learn to blend, who close in combat, endanger each other's existence, yet whose final thrust melts into an embrace, and they are one; the perfect whole, whose elements defied each other to unite, yet whose warfare was more great and strong than that between love and hate, or hate and passion. From love, Rodomant the untameable, who could not be taught behaviour, imbibed propriety without learning it. The unmannered, reticent,

abrupt, grew graceful, sympathetic, assimilative. No fitful frame nor mood grotesque—not a look or phrase to startle *her*. And strong, indeed, with the man's untarnished moral armour, must have been the love, for the fight between it and its brother-enemy—the passion, went on in her presence unseen as the rushing of the life-blood; it was maintained in a deep and secret place—the lover's heart—a *separate* place from her as well as to her unknown; for was not she given, if not promised to another? This fact, indisputable because he never disputed it, thundered voicelessly in his conscience, which, clear and void of evil, echoed it without pity—self-pity, passion's arch-deceiver. But yet, for the silence with which they grappled in her presence, these foes who might become closest friends, their victim, who was yet their master, revenged himself on himself and them when he was alone. Great struggles, physical as convulsion, racked his frame, the restraint re-acted in groans uttered, as well as those too deep for utterance. He grovelled on the ground because such place alone befitted him; face to face with clay he felt as though he drew nearer death—that only heaven of despair. Sweats, heavy as if drawn by

scourges self-inflicted, soaked his sleepless pillow, and wrung from his brain in water what might, in its primal flame, have burned to madness. With such long strifes, the body wasted, but no disease made way for itself through the impaired and fretted medium, only the spirit seemed more freely to penetrate it, as moonlight that only mocks the surface of stone with glory, filters lustrous through chisel-thinned alabaster.

The princess marked a change, but understood it not, and was anxious till she proved that, whatever the affection was, it obstructed not energy, nor touched actual health. But her anxiety informed more deeply than before, her interest, always strong, as it had been of sudden growth. His perfect sincerity and truth untainted, not his genius, had drawn from her much of her life's pure confidence; and the revelations of his genius, as a woman mastered her afterwards, before she was aware. But she was aware, and not unwilling to own, that as a friend he had crept into her heart. And while for him she felt friendly only, she was safe with as from him, not a ray of fascination—from the lightsome and varied treasury he owned in common with those rare beings,

men of great hearts and sovereign minds—he suffered to escape through his manner, impenetrable even when sincere.

From the day he saw her in the dungeon—proved it was no dream that so she spent her time, felt her singular and pathetic character through the aspect of her helpless charity; he had decided on his course. In the first place, that he loved her, and might adore her still, that he had the right, so long as he possessed himself of the power to conceal from her the least sign of the fact, its shadow's shadow. That next, he had not the right to betray to her—nay, on the housetops to proclaim his preference—merely because she preferred not supremely, him. Thirdly, he thought—he would have said he was certain—he knew whom she preferred, and so believing, he considered it not only his right but his duty, to convey to her by all and every means his own impression of the person so marvellously favoured. This he had done invariably whenever he had the opportunity, and with as little effect as he would have persuaded her of the scentlessness of the rose. But now he bethought himself to employ other means than such as he had vainly exhausted—means certainly fair and legitimate,

though unprecedented, because they were placed in the power of no one else, and besides would have failed to affect ordinary—or most extra-ordinary women.

The very day he had seen her in her morning audience, breathing comfort where she could not save, she sent for him after her return. He reached the rooms after the mid-day sleep, which had been neither sleep nor rest to her; it seldom was, in fact those hours alone she *dreamed*, those only hours she allotted to what she would have named selfish — that is, maiden reflection on the future, the hoped-for, the untried—the secret-chosen she believes has of her made secret choice.

She was of the temperament so difficult to save from the minute momentary shocks of which such myriads go to make up one day's suffering. Bright—never brilliant—but bright at evening, in aspect and of intellect, she seemed to brighten with the star-time, with whose glory her glances wore affinity, as well as her lofty, yet dewy-tender thoughts. But in the morning-light her lustre waned, or was veiled under a spotless cloud; her pallor was ever then remarkable, though instinct with her beauty still. Fatigue

and the sadness gathered from her chief pursuit, touched her paleness with mortal reminiscence, which at night dropt from her expression of spiritual radiance and more than mortal purity.

That tintless pallor, when Rodomant beheld, sent a trembling terror through him; so did the soft-azure shadow round eyes whose colour and very meaning seemed to retreat more from the sight by day. So did the natural exhaustion of the frame at once so delicate and highly-strung—this seemed unnatural languor.

Loves's unhallowed idea quivered like wings heard in darkness, through his brain; a phantom paler than she rose and stood still before him. The name love will not whisper, was echoed without a word by the swell of his low sighs to his throbbing ear—the idea, the phantom, the name of Death. "She will die—she will die!" seemed reiterated ruthlessly, as a lost and wandering strain of music no player shall ever give life to. A white and rentless veil, rigid as iron and cold as ice, fell between his passionate presentiment and her. Sense could never clasp, nor mortal love enthral her—to Death no virgin ever broke her promise.

Then love rose mighty—mightier than passion, as the tide is surer than the tempest—strangled the suspicion and dashed it backwards—dead. Rent the veil of ice and iron with one glance of tenderness, and saw the living countenance—pallid, but redeemed from death. One warm sigh swept the phantom, like a trail of mist, to space; one gush of love's great song, that harmonises Heaven and Creation, devoured the weak echo without a name. And love uttered to silence, passion listening,— "she shall live—not for me—but through me."

In that mood the musician sat down to his machine—no marvel at the result. Yet she wondered—that was well; it was first on his list of designs to conquer the monotony of her being —that dead sea on which her happiness eluded her, was floated wide—seemed lost. He played so as to strike great shocks on deepest-ringing iron, clashing brass, sweet-thrilling silver; all metals seemed to lend their power to tone—not merely every instrument of art was mocked, but every voice of nature mimicked; seas surged, great thunders seemed to blast the rocks, fresh-shivering breezes after rain seemed rustling in the myriad leaves, birds crowded, chirped, and

clamoured. First then, the princess rose from the seat she had taken, and came quickly where she could see his hands. They and the keys flashed against each other like showers of dancing snow flakes, or conflicting millions of elfish meteors;— difficulty was derided, impossibility achieved, execution outdone by craft. Then all spelled and quieted, a lulling lay woke warily— as not to waken some sleeper or the sleeping woe. A dew of music, such as might drop in dreams on the musician's brain; she stole back to her seat, and slept with her forehead on her hand.

"I can do as I will," he thought. Yet it was natural after fatigue, if soothed, to rest—music had but medicined nature.

This was the first and least of his caprices. Of course the fancy he had framed about Porphyro grew certainty—or rather from being a double fancy, became a double fact. How she first received, or he first dared to impart, the impression, Rodomant could not tell; but if it proved the selfishness of passion, that for Porphyro's doing exactly what he would have done himself in his place, he condemned and hated Porphyro; so it proved the unselfishness of love that he neither condemned nor despised *her* for

preferring Porphyro—rather pitied her the more sincerely, and adored her with loftier devotion. Still, he never spoke of Porphyro again, until she alluded to him herself—small credit to him on that point, as no man could have approached the subject without the indication of her will. But when, as he foresaw would happen, his music became to her a solace exquisite and inseparable, he never failed to make use of hands more persuasive and descriptive than any tongue. Nor trusted he to chance improvisation, every day some fresh memorial reached her, of dramatic genius to which there was no theme of love sealed up—nor phase of passion a dead note. Love's quarrels, the broken heart, the waiting hope, absence and meeting, suspense, misunderstanding, and union; such were the initials of his art-narratives.

"What is that?" asked the princess one day, when dispirited and weary she sat down to listen —and some vague cold meaning touched her through tangled harmonies.

"This," said Rodomant, censoriously, and loudly — without leaving off, "is a scene, or rather a case, of a woman's self-deception. Bitter wild fruits she plucks on a dusty walk, and

presses them to her lips, till she persuades herself they are sweet and all-refreshing, because the perfume of her kisses touched them. Thorns she snatches, and believes them roses, for she tears her hands with them, and the blood is bright as roses—her heart's blood, though dropped from her wounded hands. Delusions she covets—and nature helps her to create—she sees clear waters lying far out across the golden sands; she flies to them, they fleet from her—at a glance of the sun they are gone, and she sinking to the hot and yielding ground, has her parched mouth filled and choked with dust. Torment and anguish spring like giant shadows from her solitude. She will not bear them company—she renders up her solitude to Another,—no shadow—she will not be alone. Alone? Before, she was alone with solitude, God's freedom; now she is alone with a corpse—Death's solitude. Then, by the side of the love she sought living, and found dead, *her* love lies down, and dies. But passion, that cannot die *unshared*, goes mad with her, and in the hideous duality—loveless, frenzied—she whirls about creation long after her life's end. She will not rid herself of the phantom—for it is a phantom, heavy as a night

mare—for confession alone will lay it; and she will not confess—no woman ever will—that she was *deceived*, not in love, but in what she loved!"

So raved Rodomant, in the pauses of his magic; his unillumined and fantastic theme, groped out in crude and darkling transitions. Certainly, such wild, boyish words should but have excited to mirth; perhaps roused to satire, a woman as wise as the princess. Why then the proud silence, that yet from the aspect's changeful anger seemed as if it must rend itself with indignant negative? Why the dropped eyes, not with contempt, but a pained and curious shame? why the quick hectic, kindled sudden clear as fire, on the cheek's pure pallor? And why the retreat, not the august and quiet step that of habit seemed born to tread—not on necks, but flowers it feared to crush; but rapid and impetuous, as if driven? No salute, no turning of the head; and after that day, no summons to the minstrel for many days.

That Porphyro was one of the great, few in all the ages. One of the chosen—by God, or the god of the godless—Occasion—which means not the same as Circumstance, the secular name for Providence. He was one who could and

should only be judged by the children of the future, who will walk lightly over our resting dust. For they, whether their natural gifts, their advantages of culture, their purity of judgment, are to transcend ours or not; will certainly survey the past through no heat-mist of excitement nor glow of heart-enthusiasm; nothing prepares prejudice like the passion of personal experience, before its object is laid in earth, from which springs only the rigid truth, cold as the marble of the monument.

Porphyro was a strange person. The Creator must have loved him, and it may be, as humanity's best friend loved the man, who sorrowed because he could not bear to leave all things for that love. Alas! for Porphyro—for the great and dominant, whose hearts beat too low and even to be listened to, and heard, in the busy working-day, through the crashing incessant turn of Labour's wheel, and the grinding footsteps of oblivion's Progress. In the cool of the day, that pulse might be heard to beat, a lulling and tender promise; as the first Time-servers heard the voice of divine love in the pulses of the leaves of Paradise; in the evening too when Labour paused, and Progress treading

down the moments ever, trod in silence. But these sabbaths were too short for Porphyro to learn in them even the alphabet of that great philosophy—the heavenly philosophy of love—as available for earth and every principle of utility; which in gratifying its own impulse for satisfaction, only compasses that to fulfil the happiness of another—or of many *others*,—or of all the world.

Porphyro had a heart whose every pulsation, measured by himself or not, was beneficent. But he was without impulse entirely. He had an ingrained generosity in lieu of, and greater than, all nobility; he had never trodden on a worm, nor spurned the most degrading weakness of anyone who had trusted him. His head contained a brain of that order, which precisely, because perfectly in order, was able to issue rules irrefragable, in cases where men of vast talents or the rarest genius owned no sway at all; or, if they essayed such, were foiled disgracefully. A brain was his, close as compact and full—and busy as a beehive with petty plans for the amelioration of all humanity; little logic for the solution of gigantic mysteries, all, to do him justice, animated and rendered *possible* to

his unimaginative faith, by his bounteous if not boundless heart. Yet the man had one fine trait—too fine and rare not to escape his judges, and which they never detected—he was strictly honest. He believed sincerely that the place and influence he coveted—nay prophesied and intended for himself—were the highest to be attained by man. There is not a question, that no enforced hero, no chosen ruler, or time-appointed chief, ever was so sincere in desiring the temporal benefit of those submitted to his destiny. Had Porphyro, with his character, owned a faith firm as his self-confidence, he might have regenerated his kingdom—had he possessed a heart great as his genius, he might have regenerated the world.

But yet, to account for the attachment with which he actually inspired the many, and the intense impression he produced on a few, it must be owned that his was no ordinary fascination. From the hour in which Fate had drawn him into her experience, Adelaïda knew Porphyro admired, as he could, loved her. Eminently conscious himself of whatever his fascination might consist in—and it was natural, or it had not affected her—he cast his spells to net

her virgin faculties, rather than her heart—at first; or perhaps because of possessing that also, he felt perfectly assured. Caught—as is the phrase—first himself—not entangled by coquettish charms—but captured by that star-like essence which, glancing from her eyes, betrayed the direction of her being, and which he could not bind any more than the Pleiad's sweet influences themselves. So affected, at once his resolve was taken. Without impulse, however, the resolve remained one; no casting of himself freely at her feet, no burning and blissfully-confused confession, letting out young passion from its bondage link by fiery link: that was not Porphyro's way. And in natural course, his unconscious, because natural, duplicity deceived himself. Though he had never fulfilled towards her the man's first duty of allegiance—self-offering—he behaved as though that were achieved, and the sacrifice accepted, sealed by her also. He wore the ring which she had not given him, but he had bestowed upon *himself*, in token of the desire of his to be crowned, and therefore as good and positive as possession.

The princess, simple in the greatness of her intelligence, of boundless, and all-embracing

heart, had sorely suffered, though none, till Rodomant, ever guessed it, or suspected. Perhaps this was the reason that she, the proudest of women in her virtue, was not angered really —only outwardly—by the strong indignant sympathy of the only being who ever dared—as a subject, or cared as a man—to fathom her mysterious pain, and probe it to its depth. Sorely had she suffered; for she whose profound and most essential passion had never been touched or breathed on, far less called into sympathetic life, had felt Porphyro's fascination too strongly for her peace—her pride. Bewildered by it, she could not deny it to herself. She had listened to his dissertations on the benefaction of humanity, when the dry bones of effete arguments, scraped from the four winds, were vitalised by his generous feeling with a transient breath, that seemed to her immortal longing. And her mind —wise as ever dwelt in woman, though not *knowing* more than woman's should be—rose expanded to the theme. Then, at the time she first saw him, he was poor and powerless, and only not an outcast because he owned to no country which could cast him forth. She was rich, had a fixed position, and, if she lived, would one

day have power of her own. But in all the pride of her own genuine modesty, she seemed to perceive his reflected; he should suffer on account of neither. She had given him opportunities to declare his devotion—opportunities so guileless, chaste, yet subtle, that women would have smiled at, and men have mocked them as such. Yet these all stood against her, unacknowledged, unresponded to. Brief language, a few expressive simple words—how many souls for lack of these have been drunk up in despair's black gulf! how many hearts have drifted from their anchorage on life's calm summer sea, and been lost in wild mid-ocean!

Though the princess had suffered a vague melancholy in her hours of occupation—a deep true trouble in her hours of trance, both had sprung from a poetic sorrow almost too tender to wish away; till Rodomant's strange conduct, and ingenuous swerve from precedent, had appalled her hopes. In proportion, however, as she prized his frankness, always the rarest quality revealed to one in her position; she desired to disembarrass him also of *his* idea, which she fondly determined to believe he entertained through ignorance.

The night, rather the evening, before Rodomant's inauguration, there came a knock at his door, not the door of the ante-chamber, but his own inmost and secluded apartment. Unprecedented circumstance! Servants were wont to appear in doorways, whose draperies they lifted, statue-calm and silent, whether they came to lay tables, or to bring written orders. Pages had their privilege of all ages, to dance in and out. But neither knocked, it was not fashion in Belvidere, save for supreme personages, when they chose to visit those of lower degree. Rodomant hastened to the door, the princess entered. It was well he was habituated to surprises such as small events become to the supernaturally sensitive; for otherwise he might have committed the fatal, for in this case disloyal, blunder of evincing his surprise. Quiet, reverent, but not prodigal of word-homage, he received this honour for the first time. She had never entered his own room before. A great change had passed on her, swift as an Alpine spring, sweeping winter to the molten snows—since but a few hours ago, when he saw her last. No longer pale, her face shone on him, its lilies bathed in bloom to which the rose is dead, her lips quivered with the shadow

of an inward smile, whose meaning was not for men to read and interpret outwardly. Her whole aspect betrayed that joy lends a charm to beauty more divine than that of sorrow—whatever poets may say.

"I am happy to say," and her voice contradicted not her countenance—"that our friend—no longer to be called Captain—Porphyro will be here to-morrow on purpose to hear your new work, and to see you invested."

"On purpose!" Yes, the words were accented as if she well knew what excuse he made, and thanked for it herself, the *cause* of the excuse.

"That is not all," said Rodomant to himself, his cynical observation not affecting his courtesy—yes, courtesy, the ease which gentle passion, strong as gentle, lends the rude and proud. "That is not all—she conceals something; a woman always does. Thank God for that token; she is fallible after all. She wants me to ask her too." This was true, and equally true that she knew not she desired him to question her. Few men indeed stand pure, that test of being *needed* by the woman of their passion's choice—it is commonly sufficient for a woman to show that she requires physical support or spiritual

help, for a man to turn against her physically, and despise her in his heart. Not so Rodomant, his uncompromising nature only rebelled against power; therefore, in her momentary weakness, he succoured her by an impulse, as he would have risen seraph-strong to aid her in extremest mortal exigency.

"Your highness will excuse me,"—in an interested tone—"because my curiosity about an extraordinary person was authorised by your opinion. I cannot forget that he spoke kind words to me, and procured for me advantages I can neither name nor number. I am not vain enough, though perhaps I am too proud, to take any part of the honour of his visit to myself. It belongs not to me, but by virtue of the representations or misrepresentations of your highness's generosity, that the comer for the first time to—"

"Not the first time," said the princess hurriedly, with a flying flush—though he knew that before as well as she, therefore needed not to hint at it.

"Oh, of course not—I recollect. He must have been here before, or could not be known so well and so honourably respected. But he came

—as I came—a servant; and now I fancy from what I have lately heard whispered, he will come as—a master."

"Yes, yes," cried she, with an enthusiasm she had never let free before. She took a letter from the folds of her deep girdle—half-opened it—then closed it, with fingers no longer snowy—they blushed like her visage. "I dare say you know all then. You are a politician, and study the wonderful library which is issued daily in a thousand thousand numbers—whose leaves Sybilline are scattered by millions to the night, as prophecies, or records of promises unfulfilled. You read newspapers?"

"No," said Rodomant, "I don't look at papers, princess, I have no time; I have even left off reading what they say about myself. But all old ladies like reading them—because they are Sybilline, I suppose—and though I have no wife, I have a mother, which, for such purposes, is as good. So she writes to me, and as she is my mother, and takes the trouble, I always read her letters; that is the reason I have no time to read letters of lying editors to the gasping frog of a public that swallows whole whatever is dropped into its jaws—vermin for fresh flies, and marsh-

mud for virgin honey. My mother, in the last of her long letters, tells me that the old king of Iris—the king I saw looking young and handsome as a king in waxwork—is no longer a king; that he has turned his back on his people and run away. Except that, though I guess something, I know nothing. Oh! yes, I remember my mother went on to say that it had been a mistake about Babylon the great being Rome, for it was Parisinia, and that the abomination of desolation was not to happen in the east, but in Iris. There was also something about a great and a little eagle which I could not understand. Is Porphyro king yet—does he direct now, princess?"

"Not king—never, never—I told you so! But he is certainly director. You have heard nothing?" she asked, with a show of surprise which tried to hide the delight of being the one to explain and expatiate on the subject.

"Nothing—I knew not what was going on—I had no right—I was busy with my petty opera, as he with the life-drama he directs."

"See these papers—read them all," she exclaimed, bringing out from a fold in her dress a heap her narrow hand could scarcely grasp.

"You will then learn everything which I could not so well express. I have marked the paragraphs referring to the subject, and to him. You will glance through them quickly, your eye is so rapid."

Never had Rodomant revealed—unrevealed to *her* blind love—his own love as in this instance. If any other woman—power upon earth or not—had given him a bundle of printed news, and required him to read them, he would have thrown them, if not in her face, most certainly on the floor, and refused to pick them up. These he took calmly, and examined them in order carefully, it was true they were arranged and pencil-emphasised, easy to decipher their meaning if one only knew the name of Porphyro—and Rodomant knew more. Quietly he read and turned the sheets—in some instances re-read a paragraph. At last laid them on the table, and folded his arms in front of the princess, who now stood calm as he, though her cheeks yet burned as with the impress of a crimson rose-leaf, concentrated blossom of all the blushes that had spent themselves.

"I see," he began in a tone whose temper alone concealed its ironic edge, "that the Parisinians,

acting for all the towns and country-places throughout Iris, had determined to govern themselves. Straightway, as must be the case when each child in a nursery or play-room wants the same toy (and there is but one), there comes to pass a childish quarrel. The children fight—first pretending they do so for fun—bruise each other, blind each other with black eyes, scratch till the blood shows, and pile up their lesson books in corners for self-defence. When the dispute is loudest, and there appeareth no end, the wisest of the children—not many to be sure of them—gather together out of special attraction for each other—such attraction as the witch's pot had for the witch's pan in the old story. They collect in a corner, leave off quarreling, and proceed to chatter. Being a few faculties wiser than the rest, they agree shortly that fighting disables them and others from obtaining or preserving the precious and unique toy. They clasp hands, and compliment each other, then finish by agreeing as follows: 'we will keep together, and when the others see us nodding and whispering, they will feel and acknowledge how clever we children are.' But this did not happen, the others made too much noise. Then

said the biggest of the clever children, 'let us join hands round the rest, and enclose them in a ring, and let our wrists be broken before they can get out.' This succeeded better—the other children were taken by surprise, tired too with blows and bruises. 'Now,' said the biggest child, and the others in the ring after him, 'let us put the toy on the table, with a glass case over it, or pack it up in a drawer, then it will be safe, cannot be spoiled or broken, and will belong to all, not to one in particular.' The children, clever and stupid, all agreed to this, for, thought each, (none said so) if once the toy is on the table, I can smash the glass, when the others are asleep or stupid, or break the lock of the drawer; then will the toy be mine.' But on a sudden it was remarked, that one child had neither joined in the ring of the clever ones, nor mixed among the quarrelers. Then the biggest child turned to that child—he was noticeable not because of his size, but because of his smallness—he was indeed the smallest of them all. The biggest child said, 'pray don't stand there in the corner, join our ring, for your wrists are very strong.' The small child had always been noticed for his skill in knocking down ninepins, and his strength in

batting at cricket, besides his cunningness in tricks with cards. 'Oh, I will come,' said he carelessly, and stood among them. It was besides remarked that he took pains—the only time he showed any interest—to assure them he did not care about the toy, and would refuse it, were it offered to him. He also added coolly, that he would not stand in the shoes of the biggest child, for any reward or punishment."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the princess painfully, impatiently—"spare me such poor, such utter folly—it is not worthy of you—drop that strain."

Rodomant bowed—turned his eyes from her, and towards the ground.

"I will speak plainly instead. This Porphyro, having generously and meekly condescended to bear a hand in lightening the burden of Direction, is pretty soon discovered by the rest of them to be the only child of all, who has power even passingly to direct either the select few managers, or the mob of children with which those professed to deal. They furtively find out their own incompetency, suddenly bring all their weakness to bear upon him, and offer him the shoes of the biggest child, into which he, the least one, slips.

Now those shoes have the fairy gift in common with the seven-league boots, to contract as well as expand. They contract on Porphyro—surely it seems so, princess? Once in the place he coveted, he speaks not, moves not, he seems cramped from locomotion and free will. He must kick off the shoes that pinch him, or never will he really direct. He wants no shoeing, his heel is iron, as his brain is adamant, engraved by fate with ciphers; he translates them—predestination, resolution, and assumption."

By this time the princess had rallied her reasoning powers, as far as they were hers,—as a woman, she turned the papers over again, and snatched up one. "You cannot have read that—you ought to read those words," said she, "you have read all the rest, of little consequence as regards his character; here stands the cipher of his honour, if you like the term. See, he has sworn, yes, *sworn* never to infringe the privileges of those who have conferred on him the privilege he prizes only—of being trusted by them, their confidence his, as he is one among them, while yet the chief; no crown—no sovereignty. He swears."

Rodomant had noted that fact most of all; it had been the point on which he fastened his

misbelief, his masked contempt. He raised his head, and poured from his eyes—now void of passion, the whole lustre of his intelligence upon the princess. Never before had she met it bare, or unveiled by heart-emotion.

"Sworn, and sworn falsely," he uttered. "For it were against his nature to fulfil the vow. If he keeps the oath, he is false to himself; if he breaks it, false to them. I am glad to see, princess, that he saves himself by the skin of his conscience, anyhow; however, time seals the result. I perceive that Porphyro himself did not pronounce the oath. Its words were given out by another, and he was to assent in form. Suppose in thundering, "I swear," from his throat through the echoing space, he had whispered to his own ear only—"not;" as ladies, I have heard, are fond of doing at the altar, when they wish to slip the vow obedience. For the matter of that, what man fulfils *his* marriage letter—what woman? What human being dares swear, a finite being, under the vault of heaven? What creature of smiles and tears, of passion, of superstition, and of awe, can engage to keep his word? True honour needs no oath, its guarantee is faith, more certain than any vow, though in the heart its

music is often mute, and it never writes promise on the forehead."

This remark closed the conference—whether in wrath or woe, indifferent or disturbed, the princess left him without acknowledgment, as indeed, in one sense he deserved. But his words haunted her all night like oracles, so strongly closed on memory and thrust all other meanings out, that though she took care to hide their sense next day—and many days—in her deepest heart; it was certain to return again—desired or unwelcome.

CHAPTER III.

A SLEEPLESS night brought Rodomant to the important morning birth-hour of *his* inferior, yet for him, loftier Direction; he, too, had his pride, but he freely confessed it. At noon he entered the theatre, white dome of dazzling daylight, for rehearsal of his new opera, before the prince and members of the household guests—and Adelaïda.

The theatre was empty, vague lines of white and gilding arched in void tiers towards the roof —and the royal box projecting on its own special pillars from its own appropriate and spreading arch, was veiled from view by a fretted screen, laced through and through with myrtle branches. But Rodomant, bristling with suspicions, glanced behind him from instant to instant—during the

precursory hubbub of an orchestra which sounded like a million hives, full of bees steadfastly swarming,—and beheld the box-door opened, and saw the princess ushered into it by Porphyro, who held the door open with the air of the humblest servant, and followed after her with the air of the proudest master. The princess in her father's box! That in itself was a fact phenomenal.

Then fell the evening, stars gleamed above the noon of glory, those suns too far in space for recognition blazed upon a transient poor repute of one recognised among the multitudes of earth. This hour no empty dome, but one built up of living faces, lighted by living glances, to the ceiling's edge; and revealed by lamps of diamond-like serenity which made that plastered whiteness vivid as the eye of day. Again, the princess in her father's box—though protected from him as divided by another presence; screened no longer, but divinely—earthly beautiful for all beholders. Her dress too—the mourning virgin and sad-coloured sister of humanity—a lace robe like woven light, on satin like woven moonbeams—texture, fashion, form, all those of Parisinia. Large water-lilies, fresh gathered from their cool recesses, weighed down her golden hair, and

veiled her bosom; yet she wore no jewels, only the pearls from a water deeper and cooler than the lilies' home—great pearls clasped her wrists, and melted into the pearl-hue of her neck. No diamonds,—though, on festal occasions, they only were ordained the sign of state for such as she. Did she desire to abase, and give public evidence that she abased, in *his* sight and presence, the very glory of the regalia?

Opera and anthem over—investiture of ribbon, medal, star, and sword, succeeding, over too; nothing less than that at an end the after-banquet, noiseless and superb, limited enough for him, in whose honour those invited ate and drank, to see clearly the princess next her other friend—not Rodomant, who sat beside the prince. The banquet over, those met had leave and right —unfrequent loosing of the rigid custom—to do, gather together, or depart, as each inclined. Rodomant, his senses by this time at once strained and made more keen by the demand on them, would have gladly retired, but for a look from the princess, which, imploring far more than it commanded, took him far more swiftly than would command have done, to her immediate presence. Not only hers—nor had Rodo-

mant touched a few feet of the ground from him beside her—Porphyro—before he felt the old attraction rivet him; the strange face without beauty or comeliness arrest him with interest, unenforced but felt; the half-closed eyes, with their glaze of ocean-green, woo like glance of the male siren, needing no charm of song to bid the seer *listen*. Involuntarily, Rodomant bowed, and as involuntarily, when Porphyro stretched forth his hand with a friendliness utterly unpresumptive, Rodomant took it;—ring and all? No, he took care amidst his fascination to look most eagerly, and lo! no ring clasped any finger of either pale-bronzed hand. A thrill of warmest gratitude shot through his breast—precious as a sunbeam to the frost-starved earth; none but a lover could have felt —or would understand its meaning—his exultation. *She*, then, had not given him the ring. But, next instant, as rapid an icy spasm checked his joy. What would she now think of his pretensions to veracity? Absolutely for a moment the iron influence of the other griped his memory, and held it in a numbed suspense; he could not resolutely believe that he had actually seen the ring.

But when somewhat recovered, he looked up,

he saw she was far too happy, if excitement implies bliss, to notice or regret such a deficiency. Never had she shown so witty, so profound a mind, wrought to vivid repartee; it resembled a deep lake, diamond-stirred by a sudden breeze; and yet for the glancing revelation at the surface of those treasures never fathomed, her loveliness avenged itself, and earthly joy only lent her more and more unearthly beauty. Porphyro spoke in his own peculiar short, but meaning sentences; she replied at length, Rodomant constantly silent, save when especially addressed, stood by Porphyro, and gazed steadfastly forwards at the room, lest the aspect of her loveliness should lure his love a moment from its vigilance, its determination to obtain the truth in this rare opportunity vouchsafed. So, fervent and yearning as a mother, with the discernment and calm of a brother, while, suspicious as a lover, he watched Porphyro. In the aspect, the manner, the expression of that person, there was nothing to blame or question; adoration, blent with deep devotion; rapture, chastened by respect, were the impression one could not, ever so fastidious, deny. The voice which, in its elevation, had a blasting, if not brazen tone, now dropt to the softness of velvet-

muffled metal, stricken. As for her face, while she listened, it was veiled from Rodomant by his own design; but her voice, of temper rather golden than "silver," as cited by poets to the being who seems their universal and common mistress —her voice expressed full animated sympathy, rather than divine delight. Suddenly, across vivacious satire, which an Englishwoman would have "rung in" with a sounding laughter-peal, but which she left to its own fate unadorned, there floated a fragrance in its very homeliness mystical, and almost painfully exciting, a scent of Saxon violets, or what Rodomant would have called German ones, the very moss-mixed perfume which gladdens the wide fir forests in his own bleak, glorious country. There were in the cool conservatory, and there only, as he deemed, violet plants; had the princess been there, veiled from vision by her own projected phantom in the spirit, and gathered them? For certainly Rodomant, who had passed the night preceding beside the fountain, and the morning when he was not elsewhere, in the rooms so near it, had never seen her, flesh or phantom, enter.

By magnetism, whether approximate the most to animal or spiritual, two minds of equal

strength are wont in each others vicinity to detect a change or shock of thought in either. Porphyro suddenly lifted his voice; it sounded metallic still, but no longer muffled.

"Do you remember," said he to Rodomant, "our meeting in Parisinia? I was in close quarters then! By this time, I am somewhat better off—my house at least gives me room to look freely out of the windows, and I have a garden."

"A garden," replied Rodomant, quite easily; "I should scarcely think you had time for one, either to enjoy or to cultivate."

"It takes no time to inhale enjoyment as one breathes, and my garden requires no cultivation. It is a sort of exclusive paradise for me, and yet consists only of one single plant."

"A plant for which nature has taken out no patent, I suppose; a unique, a monstrosity of vegetation."

"I thought it might be, myself—but was agreeably mistaken; for though I might not have minded a 'unique,' I should have decidedly objected to a 'monstrosity' in encouragement of my mood and aspirations *then*. I was walking on a dull and dusty road, a mile out of

Parisinia, when a gardener's cart passed me, filled with green plants, balm and other herbs; primrose-roots and such common charming things. Presently, after it was out of sight, I came to a dry brown stalk with stems and leaves equally shrivelled, like paper burnt to ash; this was left by the wayside, and I felt sure it had been thrown away because it was thought to be dead. I picked it up—no theft there, I believe?"

The princess was listening, like a child to its first fairy-story; yet for her this was a twice-told tale.

"I took no care of it, except to put it into a pot of earth; as one would put a frozen lamb to the fire. The pot stood in the window; I never expected the plant to flourish, nor could guess what family it belonged to; in fact I believed it dead, yet would give it at least a *chance*. I was myself at that time very anxious; I was dead-hearted, and my spirit had as it were frozen. I had cares, I was in darkness with them; thick darkness of the mind."

"The darkest hour—before the dawn," murmured the princess, whom it seemed Porphyro's presence had touched with simplicity resembling matter-of-fact—his own—during this relation. *He interrupted* himself not.

"Somehow, that dark time, I learned to associate my destiny with the fate of the dead-seeming weed. I used to say, 'I am flung by men out of their experience, and judges no longer accept me as worthy of the lowest test; were I a vile nonentity, neither human nor animal, I could not be more obviously disdained, more mutely cursed.' Let me watch whether this brown rag of vegetation has any life left, any soul, any fate—there should be fate in flowers."

"Certainly, as likely as in stars," muttered Rodomant, captiously; and Porphyro gave him a glance, as unlike that which he sideways turned to the princess, as light on granite differs from the sheen of emerald. A hard and defiant inexpression. Men's eyes ever dropped under it, as they always followed—fixed by—the glassy-emerald stare; even Rodomant was repelled and cowed. The man had both ends of the magnet in his dual nature.

"I determined I would leave it to its fate," resumed Porphyro, "as I had flung myself into the tide, or counter-tide, of mine. I never watered it; I never turned it to the sun, nor gave it air, nor stirred the earth about its root

—if one it had. Its leaves, without air, sun, or water, raised and uncurled themselves, grew green, were shaped into the form and type commonest amidst mere leaves; yet whose shadow protects a blossom the sweetest of the field, and of the garden, which, were it as difficult to cultivate, would be prized as highly as the rose. But would this blossom so yield the secret of its value? I knew not, for I had made up my mind not to help it, though, certainly, little black knots crept here and there under the green. One morning, cares at their thorniest were blunted and dispersed, thick darkness turned suddenly to day—I found my Destiny in my own hands. Weary, but at rest, in confidence, I returned to my home; as I entered, I perceived a delectable fragrance; as I advanced, I saw one of nature's triumphs, which, from repetition, never weary. In my window the plant had flowered; it was a nosegay of finest violets, their purple worthy of their perfume. Sudden as Aaron's rod they had blossomed into being—so had my Fate in my own hand."

And with these words Porphyro fell a few paces backwards, as if to exhibit the princess. Repugnantly, therefore, yet out of necessity, far

more imperious than will on his part, Rodomant looked past him and regarded her. The direction of her drooping eyes told him where to look—they were fixed upon the lily in her bosom. In its intensely pure white cup, lay, rather shown than concealed by the petals bending from the centre, a little leafless violet bunch—a fairy-world of sweetness, and purple as imperial night; purple, deemed Rodomant, as the director's unfulfilled imperial dream. Or was it only the result, this fancy, of his fanatical habit and pleasure to trace and hunt analogies? Perhaps so.

And Rodomant, for that moment fascinated beyond caution, though doubly vigilant, watched the princess, who at *that* instant noticed not him nor any. He saw that her eyes, still downcast, suddenly fixed themselves on the cross terminating the rosary of huge pearls round her throat—a cross composed of pearls so large that seven of them formed the sigil Catholic, six inches long. And the last pearl of the base—adding of course the weight of the rest thereunto, touched, as she bent her neck, the heads of the lily-cradled violets. He saw then that with a singular, tender care, she unclasped the cross

from the string, lest it should crush the flowers, and handed it to the ladies nearest.

Then Rodomant, vigilant in the very crisis and intensity of his own passion, chafed to torment —looked away from the princess to Porphyro— for he wished to ascertain whether *he* too had detected the token of virgin interest. And Rodomant's own face glowed with a sudden and virgin-like shame. Not at her gesture, so sweet, so chaste, so involuntary, and yet tender; but at Porphyro's expression, as he viewed it too, the furtive flame-like glow that crossed rather than filled his eyes—a basilisk-like glance blending gold and green—not sly, but clouded and filmed over, as it were, by the mist exhaled from passion, which the spirit had not love and light enough to pierce and scatter with "healing wings," those beams of heavenly morning. Yet neither was it this look that angered Rodomant, but the change in Porphyro's countenance, when the princess met it next; then the sultry lustre went out, or rather in—the old gloomy impression rolled back and smothered it—and Rodomant felt sure the passion, as well as the manner, was too much under command to be as generous as it was genuine. Perhaps Porphyro detected

Rodomant's dissatisfaction by his infallible gauge for motives—certainly he had not seemed to see it. But Rodomant was astonished to find himself again so soon addressed.

"I was very happy," said the director, "that his highness's invitation reached me at a time when I had just enough leisure to dare to accept it. I had heard so much of you—I was not wrong, after all, in desiring you to leave us. You too have reaped your wishes, a harvest of honours, not one single ear shorn from the sheaf, nor wanting," and he sighed.

Porphyro sighed, no love sigh, not subtle and soft enough—rather the short and eager gasp of the race-horse, as it nears the goal, and feels as if flying *from* it by rapid and violent re-action of sensation—the goal it may yet fly short of. The incurable Rodomant instant coupled with that sigh the idea, "one want then is shorn from *yours*, or unfulfilled."

So, in one of his quaint asides, he muttered, "If the reaper leaves the richest ears on the field for the gleaner, what then? it is the reaper's fault that from his bundle the most golden rays are shorn." But the accent was too meaning, as well as the articulation too prolonged, to escape

the princess's attention. The remark, besides, concerned Porphyro; she arched her bending throat suddenly; loftily as a swan disturbed, and flung at Rodomant one of her imperial glances, which, however, failed to touch him like the yearning mother-grief she had lavished on her prison-martyrs. And the sharp reflection which his discernment pressed on him, pressed back his pride besides, and made his heart swell full and great with pity, still passionate pity; for all his sense was passion, as all his soul was love. That grief overflowing the heart moistened the eyes with sudden dew; he regarded her with those eyes an instant, as though they two alone stood together at the edge of time with earth behind them. Porphyro therefore marked, unmarked, the change in both the faces. But, after that review, looked straight up into the colour-cells of the splendid ceiling; superb in his own granite calm. For Porphyro had a *thought*, and in what terms soever he expressed his feelings, his thoughts he never revealed as they rose in him, and scarcely ever, except through his actions, in the end. Even Rodomant suspected not he had been watched, believed that Porphyro, tired of the hour which ministered not to his secret, had

dropped into his favourite pastime, a purple study. And he believed so still, even through the interest implied for himself in the next remarks.

"I admire your new opera more than any I ever heard. It is also the first to which I could bind myself to attend with equal pleasure and profit to those which are afforded by a spoken drama. It is the first time singing ever charmed me as much as acting proper. The character of the faithful wife is indeed a thought, of conception too ideal for genuine life, but with art it justly assimilates, exactly where it differs from nature—But does your highness honestly think yourself that Fiél would have refused, not the solicitations, —those of course she would have rejected—but all sympathy with the regrets of her old lover; and *that* when her husband, her second lover, whom indeed she had been obliged to teach herself to love, was safe in prison, quite out of the way, and disabled from knowledge of what his wife was doing—would she have refused to feel pain for herself, in denying him that last request, a last embrace?"

But the princess was covered with confusion—nay with blushes the deepest that had ever dyed her face; and her eyes fell lower, lower, while

her neck arched more and more. She could not answer;—for the character of Fiél, the heroine, was taken from herself, and she knew it, though Rodomant had never hinted so, nor any other person guessed—not Porphyro, or he would have never tampered with the theme. It was a spiritual resemblance in a mental portrait, such as a keen soul alone could have achieved, and the original knew it without acknowledging it—because she felt it—it faced her, soul to imaged soul.

"I think you should ask *me*," observed Rodomant, with a dignity none would have dreamt of his possessing,—he learnt himself but for the occasion—Braced by it and consciously exalted, he *looked* a head taller than Porphyro, yet was but exactly the same height as he—"I supplied the incidents, even the details of the story. I have also a turn that way. It is a fiction, no historic tragedy, nor home-bred comedy. The faithful wife, the type of Faith—all types should be pourtrayed as feminine—would cease to be faithful, if for a second her heart swerved. If her *heart* were faithful it had not mattered (save for the good taste of a woman) whether her lips touched alien clay, or

not. Some women would have tried that trick to save their husbands—as a chance, I mean; for recollect her husband was in the power (and in one of the prisons) of the prince, her old peasant-lover. But she is Faith, this wife, therefore she keeps her vows to heaven as though still in the sight of man, and in the sight of man as before heaven; for the same reason, she reiterates her vow of constancy to her husband when he is torn from her."

"But," urged Porphyro, "heaven seeing the heart, how could she keep, as narrated, the heart's vows to her husband pure? when the old love, the prince who had disguised himself as a peasant in those old days, that he might prove her disinterested and *free;* when he asked for *one*, and that to be the *last* embrace? For she must, in nature—whatever for conveniency the plot contains—she *must* have loved her old love still; he was her first passion, and her maiden choice; the husband was the master of her affection, and her love's counsellor—love which (even if not a counterfeit) was but the cold shadow of the primal passion."

"Not so," answered Rodomant, with flashing eyes. "The peasant, prince, or—never mind

his name—only call him not lover in whom selfish passion has smothered the innocency of love's intent; he thought himself still beloved because the stifling fog, which wrapped his own heart, excluded him from the contemplation—from the perception—of the intense and heavenly altar-flame lit up within her heart by love, or of the angel ever hovering there to feed it—Faith. Faith is as incomprehensible, nay, as false an abstraction to the libertine, as chastity; both are words which represent to him no idea. To him, faith is a *dead* letter, as chastity is *cold.* In fact, that is because he, never having been faithful, neither deserves nor will attract faith; just as to him chaste passion has a clasp of ice. For chastity is the allegiance of passion; exclusive, concentrated—contains all the celestial warmth human yearning can woo from heaven; fire which shall consume not with clay, but return with the spirit to heaven. In a sentence, Faith is devotion of the spirit, as Chastity is devotion of the passions. Human love and heavenly are not so far apart, for the love of man and woman (to be pure) must be as single as love to God—for each other."

"Your purism will lose you your fame, so

dearly and lately bought, unless age and experience shall divert you from the fixed idea impenetrable, which so many minds have split at, gone, as it were, asunder in the darkness. In this great age, when every movement must be *onwards* if the mover wishes to keep his advantage; when individuals march, as armies *used*, against error and corruption: and, mixing in the mass, they who repine too much, or pause for insane speculations of no avail to man, will be swept out of the path of recognition; nay, crushed into oblivion's dust."

"Stay, I am astonished," said the princess, smiling maiden-sweet at Porphyro. "I am surprised to hear you *make* occasion for a squabble with one you admire; indeed, I am shocked. You must make your peace with Herr Rodomant, who is so great a friend of mine, that I cannot forget he was first presented to my appreciation as a friend of yours."

"No squabble," said Porphyro with dexterous deference, "but a tail of an argument; we let the argument slip us, and only retained the end. I really have one more critical remark, if I may venture so to call it, to insinuate."

To Rodomant,—"Did you really mean to imply,

what is not expressed but obscurely hinted, that the faith of the wife to her husband *secretly* remained intact, as well as her conduct?—that she absolutely retained no emotion in favour of her former suitor? I thought a wife's triumph was to resist temptation, which is not temptation, unless *felt* to tempt."

"Why do we pray *from* temptation to be led, and believe, as we are told, prayer offered up in faith is answered? Things and persons tempting, formed to tempt—are abundant in the world; they cease not out of it any more than the poor. Then it must be that they who are faithful in praying, as they are heart-whole in love to God, are powerless to be affected by temptation—rendered so by love and faith. So with the wife towards him who is next, for her, to God. It was indeed no trial to Fiél to refuse the request of her old lover—she no longer loved nor believed in him—she dishonoured him indeed. It was certainly a triumph, yet rather a triumph of honour than of love—love is its own crown, or rather needs none; she, faithful to her womanhood, as in her wifehood, could no more honour than love a man who had deceived her. Fiél quite as much repudiated the prince, because on their

first acquaintance he had recourse to deception—in order to prove whether her liking and regard were for himself alone, or for the rank which invested him besides—as because she had discovered the hollowness of his character, its artifice, and the narrow coldness of his heart."

"Assertion is not argument," observed Porphyro tritely. "I am not prepared to assert, even when I am certain; I prefer to prove. But you and I have both forgotten in whose presence we have discussed so openly. Her highness must be more than tired of the subject, and of us. Shall we therefore both retire?"

The princess, less calm than he, was visibly amazed at having attention drawn to her; also she was evidently at that instant in the frame very frequent with women possessed as she; she looked here and there, at last fixed her eyes on Rodomant, with a distressful kind of gaze, as of one longing to avoid all scrutiny — but that of the faithful friend. That glance always tested Rodomant's devotion, for it always called it forth, instead of the excitability, named enthusiasm falsely, which weak-charactered men claim in extenuation of their irrepressible interest—interest they have no right to show. Through the rose-shadow of her still

warm blushes, he, with his eye so vigilant, could detect her insufferable weariness; and detect its cause without complaint or murmur to his own heart—weariness of him, and longing to be left alone with Porphyro. Rodomant ever detested demonstration in presence of a third person; he sometime eschewed his lesson, newly learned of etiquette—so on this occasion. He watched his opportunity—soon given—for the princess—as women, obviously interested in a lover who has *acted* but not yet *spoken*, ever will—was fighting out her self-resistance to the last; and after her openly evinced confusion, interest, her burning blushes, not yet faded, betook herself to a rallying and mild disdainful mood, touching every matter which was rife among the wise and foolish at that hour—saving only the theme just touched and left by her two rival knights.

Rodomant, without rustle or spoken word, retired behind them both—no slight worry for one who detested general company as he; for he had to pass through a calm and noiseless crowd, each individual of which seemed gifted with eyes behind, before, all over; albeit, it made a show as serene and splendid as an oriental flower-garden by moonlight. There was not one person

with whom he could have exchanged salute, though treated in positive *familiar* by the master of them all—for Rosuelo only entered the palace on rare occasions, these never secular ones.

Midway in the immense room had stood the princess with Porphyro, withdrawn from the doors and from her father's place at equal distance. Rodomant, without peril, except to his sensitive pride, attained the near neighbourhood of the doors, and there, on one hand, beheld a group of persons too pre-occupied with themselves, or with each other, to observe him. As he passed close by them, he heard them, to his amaze, chattering peacefully in Parisinian, a tongue more rarely used in Belvidere than in any modern court, and which those used evidently too much at their ease to have adopted—it was their own. What could such sign portend? A few feet farther — those feet embracing the only void space in the room, and quite close to the gold-wrought velvet draperies of the doors, thrown wide behind them; he caught sight of a countenance he was certain to have seen before. Impossible—for he *knew* it not—yet must have dreamed of it, for it dawned clearly on his memory, as forgotten

dreams are wont, in certain moods, most vividly to do. It was a regular and brilliant face; its impression that of contemplative enthusiasm—which, obviously withdrawn in spirit from those about it, yet contained not the mysterious *indrawn* expression of the poet, musician—or mystic proper. Rather it seemed bent and fixed upon a vision suspended before its eyes, between them and other countenances, which vision it serenely studied. Perhaps at the moment Rodomant passed him, he had ended his contemplation; perhaps Rodomant's form intercepted the vision more decidedly than the rest of those moving or moveless around—at all events, as Rodomant passed, the other started back, and in a moment the instinct—which, like a fine and viewless chain, is only felt when along it quivers the delicate electric force—the artist instinct woke, in each, for each. Even then Rodomant knew not his brother's name; only knew he met an artist, and also that he had met him in the flesh before. And the remembered stranger-brother brought his bright eyes to bear on Rodomant; while a smile as bright, gave the assurance so genial to the sensitive, that his face was also recollected. No vanity mingled with

the pleasure, though perhaps some pride, when the unknown bowed profoundly, gracefully, and said in a charming voice—

"This is one of the most delightful moments of my life; I thank you. In your present circumstances, I never should have anticipated you would have quitted your *late* companions, to identify me; I see, *they* cannot spoil you—if so, none can on earth."

"Why, I might say the same thing, which would be to return no compliment. But in this place, of all places, it is most natural to recognise a—friend, may I say? I yet scarcely claim that right, for though I now clearly recall where I saw you, and how, and that you did me the honest kindness to invite me in those unmarked days of mine, to your own house, yet I cannot remember your name."

"Scarcely strange, for the mob did me the honour to pervert my baptismal badge—which had been conferred on me with intention too sublime for the occasion—into one rather too ridiculous. I am therefore Rufus, or Raphael Romana—as you will.

"But you did not mind that, when last and *first* I saw you. You were, on the contrary,

proud of it, I recollect that. You said it showed you had character and principle as an artist, that you had founded a *fact*. The title seemed as dear to you as that of Vandyke brown must be to the oblong-square imp of that name in your colour-box." Romana sighed, in the involuntary unchecked manner which betrays that sighs are frequent, have become an unnoticed and indulged-in habit; also he smiled mechanically, as though the allusion touched no interest of his own, or an interest grown wearisome, without fruition.

Rodomant, elate in that new dignity of his, whose agreeable assumption softened the asperity from his address, instantly bethought himself that Romana, a stranger there until that time, might possibly be glad to accept him as a companion, perhaps as an interpreter; he was competent for that now.

"May I ask," he said, "at what inn you put up here? I never was in one of them; but I have heard that they are infested by a race of vagabonds and thieves who enforce toll from all strangers, in the robbery of that precious thing, one's night rest. In this climate, such rest is needed doubly, save by those inured—as I."

"I am not likely to suffer so; I came in the

retinue of the director—at least, he brought me with him for purposes which are to benefit me; and he does not conceal will do him service also."

"You came with Porphyro? Astonishing! You? Why I should have fancied nothing but a convulsion of nature, which had cast the cultured rock of Britain into the Mediterranean bosom, would have displaced you from it, save as a voluntary art-tourist. You looked and seemed as if *founded* there, a statue of ambition's apotheosis, crowned with golden laurel."

"No such thing, for *there* is no such statue—apotheosis or archetype. Yet I came voluntarily; it was my pleasure even in being *his*. He is a true patron, in deed, not vamping words; he neither grudges what is needful, nor pampers with the superfluous; he finds and offers opportunity, which is all a proud man ought, or an artist is ever willing to accept. Well, I was waiting here for his commands; I do not mind acknowledging *his*. He announced to me his intention of retiring very early, or rather of remaining only half an hour. I suppose he is jealous of his freedom, as he cares not to confess his chains."

This allusion was one which Rodomant chose not to identify in neighbourhood—even not near —of other men.

"Are you bound to retire when he does, then, or obliged to remain as long as he may choose?"

"Not at all; I stay for my own pleasure. I have been studying and pre-producing my subject."

Rodomant's curiosity stirred, but he would not give it wing.

"And do you live with him—I mean, is your apartment near his?"

"I neither know nor care. I was out all the morning botanising—what a flora! she is indeed a goddess! When I returned, it was time to dress. I had a room of porphyry illustrations, fit for Porphyro himself, that had a bath in it, but no bed; therefore I have no idea where I shall sleep, but I rather fancy out of doors, which I should prefer. Literally, I suppose some place is provided for us to sleep in, coming as we do with him."

"Us! then you are not the only one?"

"I told you I came in his retinue, and so I did; for if he treats his servants as his friends, it is also true he makes his friends his servants with-

out trying; and he must be a rare personage, for that species of servitude burdens not as such."

"You like him then?"

"Like him—I rather adore him, or my reverence is next to adoration."

Rodomant felt a violent impulse to laugh, with whose sudden and nervous repression his spine quivered. He would have given much for an empty room to laugh in, out of hearing, for neither in Belvidere nor Italy do men laugh; in the former region there stirs too satirical a sense of humour, in the latter, too sensitive a vein of tragedy throbs in every bosom. But if there be any German blood or breeding, it will out in comedy's best crow. Yet Rodomant laughed not — perhaps helped by his own experience of what adoration meant with different men and minds, and by the conviction that it may possibly not be more ludicrous to adore a man-hero than an angel-woman.

"If you are not engaged then, and have finished framing with the gilt arabesques of your fancy the golden pictures of your imagination, may I hope for your society myself? My rooms are beautiful and quiet—too good for me—and I have the right of master absolutely, so far as that

I may exercise hospitality whenever I choose. I have never done so yet, for the only person in whose society I found satisfaction will neither *be* good company, nor taste wine—nor coffee, which is my kind of wine; it was against his profession also to sit in a pretty room. And mine are, as I said, beautiful—that is the word—there are no *pretty* things nor *pretty* women in Belvidere, that word is Parisinian ware, the patent mark. So, will you come straight with me, and sup—I dare-say you have tasted little more than I. And I, I myself, should be more grateful than you can imagine." This was true, Rodomant's sense ached with longing to be far from the princess, whom so near he might not see—whom to watch further was against honour, yet whose *possible* proceedings cleared his heart of every other interest—if not his mind.

"It will give me the greatest pleasure," said Romana, "and I think you unlike all the world—prosperity has not rubbed you the wrong way, if you can understand what I mean. Instead of smoothing most persons, bad qualities away or out of sight, it makes them bristle." So Rodomant went before him—measuredly and lingering by the way, for he was prouder of showing the

still splendours of the palace which should one day be Her home of empire—also prouder of entertaining a great painter himself—than he was of being a familiar and inhabitant of the palace, and possessing over those rooms the temporary right of ownership.

Romana's eye was ravished. "Every corner contains a picture, and the place is *ruled* by art. What colours, and what collocation of design—fluent as fancy, stately as thought. Tints deride our skill—which have lasted so long that they must have faded, if not died, had not their production been fruit of some natural arcana, unconserved, the wizard cast the spell into the sea.'

And he walked up and down, once shut in with Rodomant—peering closely at cause, then standing afar off to judge effect, still raving in the painter's mania, sanest, certainly, of all the forms of art's sweet madness. And all the time Rodomant, oblivious of art as one could not have conceived him, was busy preparing an extraordinary refection—the servant and page allotted to him, who usually dreamed out as sinecure their office, were sent in the direction of the kitchens, things existent and real as they were out of sight, smell, hearing—indetectible to sense. Now Ro-

mana had the habit of carrying out his thoughts, and carrying on their expression in sympathetic company, whatever else was suggested, so that, when bidden to table, he talked—while seating himself, and when seated also.

"There is one thing odd," he remarked. "I had heard of the beauty of the women of Belvidere, and the handsomeness of the men, so to call it, *not* to call it beauty. The first fact I have proved, but scantily, for the sovereign representative of it differs widely in type and tinting from the legitimate accepted national ones. But as for *men*, I have not seen one who looked commonly human, not that they are bad-looking, though they certainly are not handsome, for they are blank. They have no more expression, scarcely more colour than old bronze reliefs worn down almost to their backgrounds. Dim, semi-drawn by nature, although of prime development, they all look like impressions, each one fainter and more adumbrous—of Reynolds' 'Banished Lord.'"

"Ah," said Rodomant—"a handsome man you want. Certainly, the prince is neither that nor beautiful; and for the rest, they look like medals cast of Adam the day he was turned out of Paradise; or the day before, for still they *are* in

Paradise, though it is not for them. No wonder, either, if you knew—but you had better not enquire, because it might stop your painting, and could do no good. Well, I could show you a man who is perfect for face, figure, manner, though he has done all he can to spoil his literal handsomeness. He is of grain so fine that his impositions of self and church only super-refine him. That would be a head for a picture, without need of flattery."

"Is he a monk?" asked Romana, eagerly.

"As good, he is a priest, one after rule as well as ideal. A person who would be delightful in any rank, even as Porphyro's executioner."

"What!" cried Romana, with haughty wrathful tone.

"Oh, I forgot, he would of course crown his people—assimilation of himself, by dropping into the jaws of the murder-trap—or has the director put the gag on the popular life-annihilator?"

"There has neither been an execution yet, nor has the *murder-trap*, as you call it, been put together. It is wrapped in straw and hessian, mutilated limb from limb, shelved in a stable which may be its mausoleum for as many years of *death*, as he—God grant them many beyond the mortal span—has years of *life*."

Rodomant perhaps more than any man appreciated Porphyro's greatness; he therefore had compassion on the appreciation of another for his possible goodness. He made no comment, therefore, on Romana's apt aspiration; but Romana, who still shuddered a little at the *idea* of that mangled and disarmed murder, as men of his temperament always will, turned gladly from that subject to the last before it mentioned.

"Priest or monk, I wish I might see him, dress and all, the perfect super-refined man you spoke of. I have left at home a great picture—oh, that would even cover that side of your lofty room—of a 'point' in Abelard and Heloise. I want an Abelard, none too *ideal* however, for Abelard was a faulty mortal, faultier as a *monk*, and in his face I would give the predisposition. Now a man, who has ever been handsome, can never have been *ideal*, because a *model*. Therefore, I should be glad to see him. You understand, it is against my conscience to idealise, or I should not *want* an Abelard, they would mock me with multitude. And no *common* monk would do, nor priest, because common mortals, alas! are not models."

"Poor man, you thirst for the Ideal amidst all

your surfeit of realism," mused Rodomant rapidly, "or you would not call the *common* no model. Why, models abound in street corners!—I wonder whether he would come. Certainly he desired openly that our intimacy should be both restricted, and, when carried on—in his place, not mine. However, that was when I was in other circumstances—the servants are respectful, however disrespectful-feeling to me, now! And though I took lessons in his cell, I never took occasion to return the compliment by inviting him ceremoniously. I will even try."

So he scrawled, and sent by the page a note to Rosuelo. Now the page had a horror of Rosuelo, like that which children-Saxons entertain of ghosts; and having hit hard the door sunk into the stone-cell at the angle of the convent-wall, and, on the appearance of a narrow aperture of light, dashed in the missive at all risks of reception or non-reception, rushed back without looking behind him, for fear of being forced into his companionship.

"Now," said Rodomant, hearing his report highly varnished, to the intent that Rosuelo was even then upon the way, "while we wait—for my coffee would keep hot and fresh till the end of

the year, if only my lamp would keep alight and my eyes open—do tell me something of yourself, and do not think me presumptuous that I ask you to confide, after our last interview and its confidence, which was certainly no forced one."

"It would be rather more like presumption on my side, if there existed any—in your position. Ah, I know none so enviable, yet none could be so base as to envy you—so rigidly is it deserved, so strictly was it won."

"Well, my position I would certainly not change for any under the king of the universe. Yet it is *not* enviable, nor had I ever reckoned its actual worth till you appraised it. Because *my* reasons for valuing it cannot be the same as yours."

"At home in the home of the sovereign—the kingdom's centre, close upon its core. Fancy an artist—without precise antecedent, for genius is not precise—getting such a nest in Britain."

"Oh, as far as that goes, it is merely like comparing the fate of a fly in the rotten middle of an English medlar, with that of a bee in the rosy pulp of one of our pomegranates. That, however, is nature's doing—none can contradict her."

"Ah, yes, I was wearied too with the dried

figs of Parisinia. And when Porphyro invited me to come with him for the purpose of painting the princess Belvidere, I was too glad to take any length of leap for the chance of alighting on a change. And what a change! The first glance told me that my system, the invention of my experience, is *true*. I believed it before, then I knew it."

"You have not abandoned yet your 'mission?'" asked Rodomant. "That is the proper word, as I heard it called in England. I recollect your pictures as though I possessed of each a photograph, as they call it truly—or sun-picture, as they call it, *I* think falsely, for who knows anything about the sun, or whether *that* produces the said pictures? Your paintings were faultless—how one longed for the least flaw to destroy the finite sense of their being pictures only"—

"But the real peculiarity of my pictures—their patent wrung from the majority, however they may snarl or question—is that they are *not* like pictures, but the real and visible, as it *is*, not as it is seen. Here one cannot miss that charm of Truth; the air is so lucid, it neither obscures nor magnifies; so untainted, unveiled is Light, that every object seen in it—not through its

medium—is *itself*. The dust-plumes on the butterfly can be defined and colour-drawn without capturing it; the birds show each feather—not only its sheen and shadow—on the wing; the flowers have leave of Nature to show their veins and frosted surface as clearly as their edges. Yes, one can paint the real at a distance from it, here!"

"Not at all," said Rodomant, seriously, even earnestly. "You will find it even less easy than in the land of frogs, where you had to light up a false noon with gas to illustrate your lay-angels and post-mortem models. You will find that though you have no mist to cling and gather to your edges, and wing your atmosphere with mystery, you have an atmosphere whose depth deceives you like transparent water. The foliage, too, is either of leaf so large and spreading that its viscid glow catches the light in broad silvery reflections, *these* sheened again with purple by the reflected sky, and both impossible to depict literally as the steam from morning dew: or else the leaves have fans so radiating, yet close and plume-like, that the sun can only creep between the dusky threads himself in lines of dimmest golden shadow—as easily might he

pierce with undefiled white ray to the sea-blue ocean-forests. As for our butterflies, our birds, our flowers, paint them if you *can*, (close or at a distance), articulate, anatomise them—their tints defy your palette, and yours will be an adumbration of them, poor as the northern rainbow beside the jewel-prism of the secret mine. You are to paint the princess, I think?" in no changed tone, but connecting her, as it were, with material subjects that chain not the hearts of men.

"I am to paint the princess, I regret to say."

"You regret—ah! you do not then admire her?"

"As I should admire a lilac-veined, frail-textured, white wild anemone, among the burning tinted roses and vivid wild geraniums of Belvidere. Or as one of the pearls she wears to-night in pallid triumph, near the same jewel-prism you mentioned—of ruby, amethyst, emerald. She has no colour; there is nothing to work out but her eyes, and they are too lambent, without any flash more golden than a shooting-star."

"They are cool eyes enough," said Rodomant; then with veiled irony, "I do not wonder at your

objection or indifference to eyes expressionless and star-staring, accustomed as you are to angels of the sun. How is the one you painted, and I saw—or rather, I hope the original non-angel is well in health?"

"She is well—more beautiful, more *golden* than ever, and has three cherubs, all golden like herself; gold-haired, golden-eyed, and, I believe, despite the alloy their father blessed them with, gold-hearted too. They have such limbs—large, sound, and nobly tinted; no fleshless fair nor living marble, as is the cant. Their bloom is vital, and their roses are sweeter to pluck in kisses than all your roses here. Saw you them on the knees of this fleshless and colourless royal beauty, you would of course call them vulgar looking; round their mother they play like elves of beauty, as well as imps of health."

"Your wife and your children are here, of course?"

"Dear, no," returned Romana with an eye half-anxious, half-uneasy, and a wholly mournful *fall* of face; "it would have been a deed of unpardonable selfishness to have brought them. They have a pretty home, and she has friends. On the whole, it pleased her that I should travel,

She is no selfish wife or unduteous mother; above all, it gratified her that I should come with Porphyro, certainly one of the men, if not *the* man, most marked in Europe; the wonder was that I became concerned with him at all."

"And thus they speak of one, who, a year ago, was much like a leaden franco at the bottom of a gutter," mused Rodomant, speechless. "Well, in those days I was not picked up myself. It is like a tale of Grimm's; still, I wonder about his wife."

"Don't you miss her very much? I beg pardon, your wife, I mean," carrying on his last thought aloud.

"Yes, desperately," with emphasis passionately painful; "but it was obliged to be—to stay in England was becoming also desperate. So, parted in the flesh, we enact our old love-days and dear courtship over again in spirit, for it is in absence." These words pronounced so bitterly that they touched Rodomant's weakest heart-string, albeit the most concealed.

"Separation must indeed be dreadful, be all but unbearable, unless decreed by heaven."

"Yes, but this was not decreed by heaven; it was a providence of the jealousy of man."

"How so? I do not enquire from impertinence or curiosity, but interest. It seemed to me you had reached a stand, whence man's jealousy could not pluck you—so high that the eternal tide of competition would sweep *below* your ear. You had painted for the future, too, a whole gallery; even had you died, you must have lived there."

"Oh," exclaimed Romana, with wilder bitterness, "it was not even only jealousy; it might be named ingratitude, if one dared call anything by its right name in the world."

And he paused, flushed, panting, beneath the torment of his temperament; the vivid eager, even wholly sanguine sad of mood; the character in whom it is at once difficult to eclipse hope, and to persuade that eclipse is not endless darkness.

"Ingratitude—just that, for did not I labour that I might teach? did I slur over my own defects—spared I practice, which was grinding work? Did I, having mastered at once my art and my secret, withhold my advice any more than I concealed my secret? I gave both to the world freely as to the adept—the few. I bestowed my gold, won from a purer than ancient alchemy—my pure and precious gold—I rendered

up the process also. See how they perverted the truth; and look! the falsehood, the counterfeit, retaliated not on its fathers, the false; but on me, the loyal parent of the truth, no longer secret; on me, the discoverer, the master, after such huge, such devoted, such yearning labour."

And Romana actually wrung his hands, and on his face, a glittering mirror of despair, stood two large, heavy tears—no token feminine on so lofty and intelligent a face, but of a high-strung nature, pitched suddenly too low, warped into agony by device of others, or, perhaps, by unconscious self-deception; its bright pride tarnished, its lustrous honour smirched.

"You mean that you were imitated?" asked Rodomant, with his electric intuition, which had struck that impression through his very pity.

"Imitated!" Of course I was. I had—nay, I *am* a master; my school was a rage, a delirium, an insanity—fatal popular appreciation that has ruined me, spoiled my glory, crushed my vernal wreath! It will also ruin *them*, my imitators, but not yet—not while they yet breathe to *inherit* ruin; it will come after them, slowly, consumingly, like dust, decay or death. Slow for them, for me sudden, because *they* are coun-

terfeit, *I* real; and there are in the world, for hundreds of the true, tens of thousands of the false."

"Do their pictures—such imitations—sell then?"

"Sell—they may—they do. Let them sell; what matters that? I have earned, saved, sufficient for my children at least to live. But they have taken my place, or stand near me, in the world's purblind eye, and rivalled—I am, I *will* be, nothing. Men of worth, justice, earnest optimism, who praised me as the only one who had dared regenerate Art, whose verdict was wise as well as generous, have turned from me, veered to the mock suns *behind* my place in art's pure sky. And they who worshipped my light, worship their mist-won meteors now—the monstrosities, absurdities, heresies, of my pupils and my enemies. These have cast my golden models in the dross and lava-ash of their sensual or used-out inventions, and they infringe on my patent, unarrested, because the vile and the dishonest favour them."

Well for Rodomant's courteous character that Rosuelo at this point entered, or he would have infallibly expressed, what only occurred to him

forcefully. That it must be a false principle of art which could lose its efficacy through perversions of its particular application, as imitation ever tends to enhance the value of the real. Proof in whatever deteriorates, that the foundation or *fact* was insecure.

Rosuelo entered, looking as monkish as art-modelist could desire—seeing that his monkery was but a mask and custom, after all. And the first glance at his other troubled guest, showed Rodomant he had done the best thing for him, were he to enjoy the passing hour. Romana fell into the enchantment of the snare; a face and form perfect for study, and lightly as he glanced over them, the study was in an instant prospectively sketched. Rodomant did his honours with a quaint stateliness, exactly like that of a clever and ardent child, and just so gloried over the magnificent arrangements the day had made it easy to carry out; with treasures of porcelain and plate, and damask heavy as woven silver—not to mention the exquisite dishes of game fed on sweetmeats, fish caught in the bay of Belvidere, and seeming flavoured as by some sweet salt found in no other sea, and the fruits of eternal freshness—all which Romana partook of with the

refined zest so agreeable to witness and gratify at one's own table. As for the host, he ate and drank as little as ever, yet as faithfully adhered to his bread, coffee, and dry conserve. But as for Rosuelo, who when Rodomant had drunk coffee had drunk water, and when Rodomant ate bread, had eaten nothing; that is in the only banquet they had ever shared together before; Rosuelo, on this second occasion, ate little certainly, though he tasted everything in every dish. But he drank—not glasses nor goblets, but bottles; not water nor sherbet—but wine. Rodomant was stultified out of what small appetite he possessed, and actually forgot Romana and his troubles, to watch the handsome priest. For Rosuelo was handsome now, as a knight, a gallant, a courtier ever shone. The wine breathed over him a superb colouring, if not a legitimate ecclesiastical one. His grave and even awful expression vanished, his face radiated its own inborn beauty, not repressed. What mystery, what mistake was this? or had Rodomant been mistaken before? It was some time since he had seen Rosuelo habitually—had custom shifted, or nature been concealed? He could not think the latter, for Rosuelo's conversation, though

careful, was of a stamp as different as his appetite had been. He ransacked his secular recollections, told anecdotes singularly amusing, as they were strictly proper, was elegant, discursive, literary —now and then didactic. At last, Romana, who was a person freer after wine, though never intoxicated since his birth, exclaimed joyously, "It will do, though at first I doubted it. Your very expression, as well as the scaffolding, suits. You are positively *selfish* enough for an Abélard —how much too long he lived!"

CHAPTER IV.

THROUGH that week—Porphyro's visit so extending—of course Rodomant never saw, nor expected to see, the princess alone—indeed she was never by herself. It was within the palace, a week of outward calm—after Rodomant's celebrated honours—for it was asserted, no longer whispered, that the director loving not show nor form, was besides present there at that time to achieve an amity with the princely house, too dear —and when consummated to be too near, for the ministrations of punctilio to suffice for either. Had the princess been another kind of woman, these loud rumours might have reached her, but she actually had no friend, no acquaintance, no intendant who dared to address her, unaddressed.

Benevolent in the highest degree and broadest sense, she was unapproachable, save through her charity, and so appealed to she gave bounty instead of confidence. Except to one—and that one not a woman—she had never shown a glimpse of the soul that aspired and suffered, in the midst of her own being—that atmosphere of universal love. From him too she had lately withdrawn—or rather in him she had not completed—her confidence. Rodomant knew this was fruit of his own fault, and of course gloried in the punishment. There was, however, something further to be endured this week—fleeting fast, how fast! for her—for him drawn out in almost immeasurable weariness. Now, for whatever rumour repeated, the people her servants had authority, so open and evident was Porphyro's disposition, so all but declared the meaning and intention of his presence there. It was, mystery away, really extraordinary he should have risked his new and precious guerdon-power by leaving to themselves his inferior, if contemporaneous, despots; it was a risk actual, and by no means slight—they were literally, without him, headless members, and there was no head living to take his place—the living or dead. The princess, who knew politics just as a witty

and wise true woman knows them, if she is devoted to a man devoted to *them*, comprehended clearly his sphere of policy as she could have traced the thwarting threads of a cobweb in the sun, at the same time that she was profoundly, femininely ignorant of the great and universal scheme of policy; was well aware of the risk he gladly ran, and valued his presence, albeit a passing one, accordingly. Actually none knew better than she, that he was casting present work into the future, which none other than himself could achieve, to be accomplished after that near dark day of separation which looked so far off for her, the golden glorious night of his arrival.

Rodomant, however, she never forgot; he was inexplicably associated in her mind with Porphyro. Porphyro had sent him to her father, ostensibly, but for her service, her use, her consolation, all three charges he had fulfilled. Porphyro had also benefited Rodomant; every person Porphyro freshly benefited, and they really numbered thousands by this time, made his character more precious, his great human sympathy more close and more supporting. To feel him greater than herself, in human and life-greatness, for what *she* termed his genius was merely accessory in

her esteem, was her soul's delight, all the rapture left, or rather given her in this world. So it had been she felt for Rodomant, he stood in the light she cast around another, when first he came. And of late she had remained unconscious of what was yet a fact, that Rodomant's service, society, and art were valuable and supporting in themselves alone, and on his own account. She still charged all her interest in him on Porphyro, who ruled, directed her heart, as he directed those men he chose to rule. In that man love, when pure, was not strong enough to conquer, not its object, but himself. Passion was never single, it shared his mind's design; the personal sweetness of the princess had first stricken a nature violently susceptible, which he anticipated, checked, brought like a wild horse lasso-bound, *down*, ere its first spring. Fervent as lava-smothered flames, strong as the west wind, rapid as the whirlpool; he covered, resisted, iced that passion in itself sublime and natural; and tortured himself, and delighted in such torture, all the same. Yes, he suffered, else he had not erred, had not tyrannously, unmanfully, kept her heart also in the purgatory of suspense—to purify it of all earthly selfishness, or of its love for *him*.

It was quite and simply true that neither was he here—in the little state whose calm, however deceitful, was as likely to last its master's time as the stirring, if subdued force of rebellious Iris was to endure *his* spell willingly until *his* end—to study effete tyrannism or idiot-villainy in its so named head; nor had he retired then to recreate after the struggle for success just met and crushed by him. Porphyro never paused while one stone was left to complete or strengthen his career's edifice. No, he was there, for the princess, in fact to court her, to woo her *having* won—the natural consequence reversed in his idea. Yet, reckoned by honour, in what phase of loverhood does courtship consist? Shall he who never declared love, be allowed to woo? shall he win, who loved *too* long, *too* patiently, who loved too deeply, (in short) for expression? So the princess, though she longed in her heart's heart, to be alone with Porphyro, for that reason, not avoided, but sought not solitude, shared with him only. She considered, instinctively and rightly, that his choice should direct hers there. And so his often did, nay, constantly. The very morning after that first golden night of meeting, that night when Rodomant had repined at his own conviction

of Porphyro's unworthiness of her, because in her excitement she looked so happy. This morning Porphyro had followed her after breakfast to her room; even paid such strict homage to her rank as to refrain from offering her an arm to lean on, and to stand the whole time she sat. This conduct, while she was sensitive to it as to every mood of his, only deepened her consciousness of the difference between his behaviour and his feeling. For still his looks wildly worshipped her, his eyes yearned after her, his aspect was impregnated with her fascination, in place of his own. As for their conversation, thus face to face alone, again he discussed his plans, in part fulfilled, and drew forth her ready sympathy, that on such topics owned no reserve. But at last, when after an hour this unagitated intercourse passed neither to communion of heart nor spirit, as would have been natural, seemed inevitable, then Adelaïda's unfailing spirit rose, nor would she longer remain alone with him, lest he should detect the shadow of her desolation for lack of such communion between them. So she sent for Rodomant, a message more direct and more imperious sounding than ever—which, indeed, he would have delayed long time to

answer in his person, at any other time. Now, going straight to her presence, he stood some minutes unnoticed, while she was attending to the last words of Porphyro's last epigram, and while he stood, ascertained in a glance one fact, that they were not betrothed. No witness in such a case had been endured, nor attendance of any servant commanded. What right, then, had Porphyro there? what right more than himself to gaze so? But self-conviction rose to check that condemnatory instinct; had he not stood alone with her, close beside her as permitted? had he not so gazed? drinking deeply of the sweetness of her countenance, sunning his soul in the heaven of her expression. Yes, but even then truth interrupted the pure conviction, "she loved me not, therefore I made her not suffer, nor conscious of *my* suffering in adoring her; but him she loves, and so suffers in his regard, his silence; if he takes not heed, he will himself destroy her love, and her life will relapse into the death of life—despair." In the brief space he had stood unnoticed by her, and with no eyes on him, he was yet observed. Porphyro felt his calm indignant passion, without comprehending its cause; therefore did Porphyro detest him, and

believe him worthy to be detested. Some reason he had, however, for simulating cordiality; he was first to address him, and to bid him approach; again he held out his sceptreless *directing* hand in welcome. Through the urbane action, Rodomant the more easily perceived, as by contrast, a furtive distrust in the corner, and an icy dislike in the centre, of Porphyro's eye. The princess too was momentarily troubled at his aspect, as though it were augury of rivalship unknown, yet unrevealed. Had she been questioned, she would have declared she was only troubled lest Rodomant should not behave his finest, lest he should evince too open an unservility; above all, lest he should fail to imply—if he would not express—his enduring sense of Porphyro's benefaction. She need not have feared; Rodomant astonished her, and positively, had she been sufficiently unoccupied to watch him narrowly, he might have annoyed her by the excess of his exactitude—his rigid and manœuvre-like punctilio. For each compliment paid him, he returned interest satirically sweet, and delicately exaggerated; the pains he took to divert Porphyro by a species of playing he could appreciate, was an obvious descent

to his capacity—an artistic condescension to one whose parts, how great soever, were wholly innocent of an artistic impulse. And all this deceiving the princess—though it also puzzled her with Rodomant—was felt by Porphyro, he knew not how; he could not have described to his very "bosom's lord," or lady. So affected indescribably, his manner obviously sank from its simple charm to a grave and repelling diffidence, and he shrank darkly into himself. Now the princess, who loved Porphyro much more for his plain face and form of undignified proportion, than woman ever loved a man for his beauty or his symmetry, and to whom he was much more valuable without power and place than as possessing either, thought that a sudden frame of love's diffidence, not self-contempt, had seized him; a mood fostered —in her fancy—by Rodomant's persistingly romantic music. For Rodomant withheld all passion from his playing in presence of Porphyro; he was vain enough to believe that his natural strain—all passion—might, with Orphic impulse, drive the blood faster to a slow heart, as it quickened stocks and stones of old. "And," thought Rodomant to himself, "he shall not be impelled into expression; it shall be natural, or

none." By the time the audience—short and dull—was over, and the princess, addressed by Porphyro, agreed to ride with him for the next hour, the director was quite himself again, for his sense of power had rallied with that of Rodomant's hopeless secret also. Again he shook hands with that indefinite person, and again Rodomant, revolting from the grasp, returned it in exact proportion of pressure, and ended his acting for that time by bending to the princess like a stolid man of straw.

Next day, as from Porphyro's resumed assurance (nicknamed impudence by uncompromising Rodomant), he was certain of beforehand, he was not sent for. Though he wondered not at that, he yet wondered what the princess did all day, for it was too hot to ride or go out of doors. Now Rodomant had invited Romana for all hours, and whenever he could spare the time, Romana had freely accepted the invitation. This night he therefore came, and Rodomant heard from him that he had that morning obtained his first sitting of the princess. "Porphyro was there, too," added Romana, "and I was sorry for it; for pale, frail, and unprincely as she is, I could have wished to give her a different charac-

ter in her portrait. In her ordinary moments she resembles a weeping Madonna—that is, a Madonna who is nearly always weeping, and has in her picture *lately* wept. In this accidental—or incidental—mood, she embodies the anguish of the Magdalen. I have never spent so much time in mapping out a face so hopelessly."

Rodomant crushed his teeth together, then was calm, for the sense griped him suddenly, which clutches *once*, if not oftener, all master-minds; the sense that madness is in their own power. Perhaps no genius ever passes through the gate of death without experiencing the reality also; but that here signifies nothing. The princess a Magdalen! If the allusion sent him not mad, he settled in his own mind it was because the idea was an insane one.

"You are not going back with Porphyro, I think you said?"

"Oh no, I stay some time—I shall have to paint the prince, and who knows? perhaps I may be ordered to paint *you*. There are portraits of minstrels and"—fools he was going to add—but merely told a fib,—"and poets of the court, in one of the galleries; not that I mean to compare myself with one or two of their artists—rich

with age. Well, I shall perhaps stay here six months, then go on to the east—but that too means *perhaps*. I had no intention of beginning her portrait yet, but he wished it, and she willed it instantly. He wants to see the sketch, as if he could tell what a portrait of *mine* would be, unfinished. No one finishes portraits. But then, too, no one sketches right, and the more wrong sketches are painted *out*, the falser they will appear, and be. Still, who has a good eye, or a good sight? scarce any one." So Romana mildly raved as usual.

Rodomant, appearing to attend, heard nothing, *except* when he became quiet, then inquired, "Is Porphyro present at the sittings?"—though Romana had already said so.

"Yes, and she looks at him—she could not help it, though that is actually the reason I cannot get on. After I had placed her properly, he placed himself exactly opposite—her, I mean, and as her eyes are directed straight, she cannot help looking at him of course. As he did so, he exclaimed wittily, 'I am an obtuse target for the beam-arrows of the hunter Eros.' I never thought to laugh at Porphyro, but turned poetic, he is as irresistible as a comic elf-face, painted for the calyx of an orange-flower."

Next day Romana had another sitting, the day after that, a third. Further than that, the princess having admired specially a beautiful piece of scenery in one act of Rodomant's new opera, whose scenery Rodomant had determinately superintended himself, she happened to express her regret to Porphyro that such a scene should be destroyed—or rather exist only in illusion so coarsely grounded, and with an atmosphere of gas. Forthwith, at Porphyro's instigation, the scene was put upon the stage, without music, motion, actors, or gas-light—in broad day; and at Porphyro's expense, Romana was employed to paint it after his own fashion for the princess, while the portrait was to stand over, for finish, the day of Porphyro's departure now very near. Romana made a beautiful picture; in fact it was as proper a subject for him, as engravings are fit for photography. And the first time Rodomant was called to see it, he just carried his eyes over the great canvas piled as it were with golden, rufus-tinted, ultramarine, and ruby layers, then turned to Romana and remarked, "I said you would come to scene-painting, if you remember." So, from that hour, he lost himself Romana as a friend, and very rarely received him as a guest;

thus he heard not through him how the princess passed her mornings, nor whether Porphyro's phantom-suit was *laid* by the reality.

It was the last night now of that long-short-week, and, for the first time in the evening, Adelaïda was with Porphyro alone. It was not on terraces or in gardens, for he had said something straightforward, sounding incoherent to her impassioned fancy, about its not being solitude where lights could be seen, music heard, or chance footsteps might cross their path. They had first been together in the royal saloons, and it was close upon the hour of royal retirement, when he so easily persuaded her that near the palace they could not be *alone*. The princess, desperate in her delicate pride—not in her love, she was too gentle there—would have risked almost anything this night, to have her long doubts removed—her hopes confirmed—or both crushed together. In this desperate desire there was neither shame nor self-contempt; it was roused nature in its unclad modesty, that shivers without the pure raiment love only promises to wrap it in—which love withholds not at the fulness of time—only niggard prudence, or some passion less generous than that of love.

They went down to the sea; Porphyro as ever, leading. Not near the polished stair at whose sweep Rodomant had landed, but below that, and at a point more isolated; a silvery strand, with the tide lapping close to their feet, strewn thick with shells, by day like flakes of rainbow, now like long ridges of thrown-up pearls—and ocean weeds as wild and lovely as mermaids' hair. Grey wreaths of fresh-foamed froth gave out their ineffable odour to the breathing but noiseless night; the moon was ruby-golden, low, and crescent; its crescent and reflected shadow made it a whole but mysterious-looking sphere, which lit a broad path lustrous-rosy on the oil-calm water, broken off by a cleft of darkness before it touched the shore. The heaven overhead, dark-blue as the bosom of the purple iris, seemed vault on vault higher than the stars, they floated deep in it, yet seeming nearer earth than heaven. One, vivid, glittering, yet serene, looked half-ready to roll from those purple deeps, a drop of dew from light's fountain, yet trembled onwards steadfastly—a seraph's tear, or smile! The princess asked herself this question—strangely her heart always warmed—her spirit seemed winged to those far stars she felt so near.

She had seen that "bright particular" one arrest Porphyro's eye first, and of course hers followed its direction. Soon she looked down from that glory to his starlit, nightshaded face—that owed so much of charm to the dusk and the glitter of the tempered darkness. The ambition on the rigid-strong features—passion-torn for her—the goddess, too—sometimes seemed quenched in aspiration now, the lines deep-worn with sleepless contemplation of that dim dream of Destiny, giving the countenance an impress of softer and more human care. Some passion swept his face in gusts, now faint-pale, now gloomy-frowning—and at last, the sweet gleam of an inward smile—but summer-lightning, that smiles all over heaven, lasts lonegr in its flash than did the smile.

"Do you know," he said, in a tone whose sweet expression had out-lived the smile, "that I have lately been drawn curiously towards that star? Have you ever heard how the moon *draws* men when they happen to sleep full under its light—particularly when at sea, and near the tropics? It produces strange convulsions, contortions of the countenance, which last for many days. Men must then have an affinity

with the moon. The many may—do you not think so? for they are *able* to endure its influence, though it smites them with super-terrestrial force. The sun's magnetism is too fierce, too intense, too celestial to affect men of itself; also too kindly, for, open-eyed and direct, it would consume him to ashes. So it pervades all matter,—impervious to man, affects him through matter. And also reflects its magnetism, its shadow of light and heat, in the Star of the Million, the moon. But, that star, it draws me as the moon draws the million. Other men feel nothing from the stars; I always shuddered at them as at death, yet longed to embrace them as —something as awful—and sweet as death may be."

He spoke with long-drawn breathings and pauses, that seemed to make gaps in her being. Only one thing *strong* as Death, and "sweet as Death may be." Her heart echoed—then its pulses froze, waiting for the event—the crisis, which now had surely come.

"Do you know that star?" he inquired, in tones of interest that quelled her passion, as a north wind sharply thwarts a summer noon, and bids the summer momentarily die in winter.

Tears had rushed warm to her eyes before, and brimmed them, now they clung icily as hail-drops to her lashes. Cold as that sunrise speaking statue of the desert, she stood and answered, no longer looking towards him, but at the star—which she saw not, for the ice-drops blinded it, their cold pain made her close her eyes—or was it fear? Fortunately, however, she had marked the star, and knew its name; all princesses are taught astronomy, and she had learned it, to prove her own dislike.

"It is the planet Mercury. I am a little surprised at your late adoption of one already adopted, at least by name. Then in astrology, it gives names to a physiological temperament, a whole host in one. I fancied your star was new-discovered, as your destiny is newly found. Nor knew I that it had a name except your own."

"Nor did I realise my right to call it mine till lately. In the dead of midnight the appropriation blazed upon me. It was a simple coincidence that guided my choice. You know the meaning and the use of Mercury in heraldry, in royal blazon?"

Alas! she knew, it tinted the blazon of her father's ancestral line. Mercury, the purple.

Black word, base meaning. He *could* not mean it so. How strange—so strange, that it seems unlawful, is the intuition of the strong. Enthusiasm is compared to it, ignorance, or frequent blunder. Porphyro detected his mistake, perceived his precipitation, without a word or sign of hers, for she could not be paler than she had been before.

"You are unhappy?" he questioned, tenderly, the tenderness quite real, and longing to melt wholly from repression. "Adelaïda!" Never had he so named her; and in that tone, delicious to her virgin heart as the nightingale's note, breathing in music the rose's name, before it drops upon her breast.

"I *have* been unhappy," she faltered, while the ice-tears dissolved, and dried directly, like summer rain drops. "I am not unhappy now," her heart added, but not her tongue.

"And why are you unhappy? Tell me. The good should be always happy—the heavenly-hearted supremely so."

"I believe you know all my reasons—all in one chief cause that is"—rallying at the commonplace retort, too womanly ever to betray herself. "We have often talked about it, perhaps too

much ; discussion only makes one discontented, where one cannot mend. But it does me good to hear of *your* amendments, your true and deserved success. You, at least, must be as happy as you merit."

"Is the old cause *all*?" he asked. For she had never concealed from *him* her misery as a daughter, any more than her helplessness as sovereign heiress. No morbid filial sensitiveness—dead virtue, had sealed her tongue from repudiation of such a character as her father's, any more than earth-bounded fanaticism led her to use "vain repetitions" for the reclamation of his life.

"Yes, all, what need of more?" she replied, disappointment dropping its dead weight on her heart again, and something like disdain shooting a wild pang through her passion. "Was that all he had to ask?".

"All, ah! it shall be some day forgotten, and as nothing." Again the relenting tremble, and the weight was lifted, the passion-pang forgotten.

"I had something to say to you, or I had not asked you to see me so late, in such a lonely place. I have to blame myself for being the medium of placing near you a person, a man, not strictly to

be trusted, or rather one to be feared, most of all by *me* because *for you.*"

She bound her breath, she counted the inward pulses of her heart, slow, slower, suffocating with suspense. He waited for her to speak, he might as well have waited for the star "Mercury" to fall.

"I mean—forgive me for alluding to such a subject, on behalf of such a person. If your father persists in retaining that Rodomant in his service, may I ask you, entreat you, to banish him from *yours?* tacitly of course, to suspend your commands for his attendance upon *you.*"

"I do not understand—I cannot imagine."

"Of course, you cannot!" said Porphyro in an accent of arrogance, singular in a people's director, One of *themselves.* "Of course, you cannot understand, nor imagine. It is not your place to stoop—to *breathe* so low."

"Explain yourself," said Adelaïda, with the imperial air, natural and sublime when *she* adopted it, the very queen of truth and duty. "I never like—I do not choose to entertain mysterious hints of, or against, my friends, or my servants."

"Is he your friend?"

"Assuredly—I thought him yours—he de-

serves to be so, even more than mine. If he has disappointed you, and if you are *justly* disappointed, it will give me pain. But I cannot affect sympathy, unless I feel it. It is yours to enlighten me as to his error."

"I would not vex you, but for *justice*. No wonder you were in the dark—or in the light out of his reach. God forbid—the scandal—the shame—it must be stopped—it must be crushed—it shall be annihilated, and he too—if needful. Forgive my openness—*you* will forgive me, you ever forgave me—you ever will. That man—the unbought slave—the scoundrel overpaid for trickery—he dares to look at you—to think of you—to *love* you, I was about to say—but *that* is an absurdity."

She reeled a few steps from him, her head whirled giddy, her heart spun rapid with a sudden sickness, both of body and soul; her modesty, her pride, were agonised. Not at the assertion—she could have smiled at that—but at the declaration of one man's love by another man. Yet the sickness sprang from a deeper, wider wound, which opened and bled—not for the first time—but more than ever. "Oh, that he would declare his own—none other's; confess his loneliness, and

let me heal the heart which aches in solitude; fill up with my own poor faith the soul in whose void he finds no God." But this cry rose to heaven in silence; her generosity conquered her sorrow; she stood erect, braced beauteous in its golden mail.

"It grieves me that you should say so, because, for the first time, I cannot agree with you; and further, I am *certain* you are mistaken in attributing any but the loftiest motives to that person, the purest of life, and most noble-hearted I have ever known."

This was no pique; her heart whispered unheard, "We women do not love men always the most noble-hearted, nor even the purest in their lives."

"If it were even true, which I cannot see is any business of yours or mine," she went on bravely, "I do not understand its affecting you to anger, particularly now you are in power. It is not like you to oppress the weak or the strong, made perfect in endurance."

"Ah! you acknowledge, then, it concerns not *yourself?* I rest easy on that assurance; I trust you, and, if you command it, him also."

"Trust me? Then he calls me to himself,

esteems me his. Who gave him the right yet?" And the thought and question jarred against each other. "How long should this unnatural suspension last? Should not the hour end it?"

"I am sure, servant as he is of yours, and, in so feeling and daring, lower than the lowest of your servants—self-degraded—that you will maintain the distance between yourself and him, unshortened by an inch—a thought—a smile."

"Needless to promise, if you say you *trust* me." Not proud the voice, if the words so sounded, and, as she spoke, she longed more haughtily to control her tone, without success. "I am sorry you thought it right to interfere—sorry for him—for myself—for you, of whom—all three of us—such a suspicion is unworthy. One friend of mine shall never suffer in my esteem at the instigation of another, unless I find either false."

Porphyro did not reply—whether he was offended, hurt, sorry, or satisfied, she could not tell. It is most probable he was quiet because he knew not what to say; having presumed upon his own power, had too rapidly exhausted his means. It certainly would not have been easy for the gracefullest gallant to have slid into a

love-scene directly after this nondescript and unconcluded one. And Porphyro, if neither graceful nor gallant, was of tact intact.

"I am most imprudent, and have been extremely, unpardonably selfish, to keep you here so long, at such an hour—you must be cold." Porphyro's having lately left a latitude where an hour after midnight is always chill, might excuse the inconsequence of that conclusion.

"I am particularly warm; but as I am also tired, and it is past my usual hour, I will retire, with your permission." She waved her hand to him, but turned away her eyes, and walked slowly, carelessly up the glimmering steep. As they reached the palace gates (for he had followed her, of course,) she bowed again to him, and, calling her page, went on to her own nightly home. Bowing to him that last time, she could not resist looking at him, to see how he looked—and then so sad was the fascination of his face, half-jealous, half-reproachful—entirely distressed; that though she dared not stay to speak to him lest it should seem she desired *him* to speak; yet when she threw herself on the couch in her convent-chamber, she upbraided herself wildly, bitterly, for *perhaps* having left him too

soon—*perhaps* having dashed her destiny from her own embrace; called on herself as harsh, ungrateful, cruel, till her anguish was deadened to remorse.

There is a sorrow of sorrows, suffered by so few, that for the many its existence is a fable. The master-poet who told, that "remembering happier things" is sorrow's "crown," surely guessed not; happy for him if he learned not since, that the soul and essence, if not the outward thorn-crown, of great woe, is to behold, without being able to console or lessen, the suffering of the best beloved. If the one and only beloved on earth, then deeper, firmer, are the thorn points planted in the spirit. Love's roses, the delicious thoughts, the lovely fancies that spring from the consciousness that the beloved is alive on earth; those paradise-blooms may veil from vision the piercing ecstacies of grief, but more sharp-toned than any pleasure, that pain distils in the darkness on the being. Exquisite is the pain, exquisite as the joys of divinely-inspired love, of this as divinely-inspired sorrow, and it has more sympathy with heaven; for one who of old gave pattern to all both for love and sorrow, wore the thorns in his heart

ong before they pressed his brow; and for his thorns no roses blossomed in the wilderness.

It may be justly wondered how a trouble so prodigious and possessing was to fall on Rodomant. For surely after Porphyro's warning, loverlike charge, delivered with almost spousal authority, Rodomant had no chance of discovering whether the princess was sad or gay, betrothed, or from her hopes divided more than ever. Of course, the master of her heart was obeyed with the implicit sweetness of a pliant wife. Of course she, went beyond the spirit, to the extremest letter of his demand, and rigidly excluded Rodomant from her presence, even denying him a farewell glimpse! Not at all; proving at once how illogical is the rule of love, and how irrational must passion be, where most moderate expectations and requests are not inevitably accomplished. Truly the man who could cope with humanity on the largest scale of generalisation, who had successfully mastered, and illustrated in his own person the theory of popular governance, was unable to crush the heart-justice of a single-woman, as fragile as a floweret by a glacier, and shaken like a reed herself in the tempest of her own emotion.

Had Adelaïda been in his arms, and a fly drowning in her sight, she would have left his embrace to stretch forth a finger; the instinct of benevolence was stronger in her than love, how strong then!—as it should be in the woman born not only to be a wife, but to become a mother.

Had Porphyro left the subject of Rodomant alone, which, in his set sphere of knowledge, he was too ignorant to know he might have done quite safely—at least for the time he dreaded; the chances were that she herself would have restricted, if not avoided, interviews with him, as it is natural for a woman whose love sorrow suddenly impregnates, to shrink from mental contact with men and women—rather more from men; and certainly most of all from a man who had taken occasion—too far out of precedent to be termed a *liberty*—to read her heart in silence, and comment upon its impressions aloud.

Truly she shrank from men, from women, from the light; from God's eye, to which so pure a soul looked naturally upwards all hours of the day, and sleepless hours of the night. When Porphyro had actually gone, bound to her no more than when he came, she was stunned for hours, therefore—happy for her in surrounding circumstances

too quiet to reveal her torture to the most pitilessly curious eyes. But when came the reaction of the disaster, which befel so true and spotless a nature, with a sense of shame like crime—far blacker, bitterer than pride; she felt a strange and solitary yearning for Rodomant's society—such a sick desire as some persons experience in critical illness for some fruit or cate unprocurable at the place or season—perhaps it may be only for a draught of water from some spring, leagues away. It may be said that nothing could be easier than for the princess to gratify this whim of a wounded spirit—but yet it was simply impossible, because she chose not to send for him—she absolutely could not. And actually she never would have had courage to *send* for him again, had she not met him through the instrumentality of another—or by his own design.

For many days Rodomant assiduously attended the prince, dwarfing his powers for the accomplishment of caprices, and ministering to the only sense left unimpaired in that person of royalty. He never expected to see, nor saw, the princess with her father after Porphyro's departure, any more than before his visit. Least

of all persons, could Adelaïda have faced her father at that time. Had he guessed and seen her suffering, she must straightway have destroyed herself—no exaggerated assertion this. The shame—albeit ideal shame, which would have filled her veins then, and bewildered very consciousness, would have driven her to that end—oblivion of shame, if not of sorrow—which draws to its dead crisis so many women, soul-darkened with actual shame. So unused was her father to her company, so careless of her welfare, so determinately he thrust from him (into that dark place of his which held many galleries of anatomic terror) the idea of her as his natural successor; that she was safe in her certainty that he would never miss nor ask for her. He saw her so seldom except in public, when her beauty served in part for his own blazon—that to have her *near* him was an exceptional case; yet it was against the law of her life to subscribe openly to approbation or reprobation of his lawless life: a medium course which is the only one left to a pure-minded and duteous daughter, whom either of her parents insults as a *woman*, by ensample.

For the rest, the prince meant her to marry Porphyro, as much as Porphyro meant to marry

her; but that had in the prince's esteem no meaning that verged on love. Indeed, he thought Adelaïda as passionlessly cold, as he considered her beauty monotonous and marmorean. Even he mistook Porphyro's present design of pressing his love so lightly; for Porphyro held fast the passive claim, because so certain of it—more certain than man of woman has ever the right to be, while unaffianced. The vanity of the fairest woman is a trifle to the vanity of such a man. However, the prince thought Porphyro both proud and modest—that he refrained from certain motives which he had not failed to unfold to the prince—how carefully soever he had concealed them from his daughter.

One day Romana surprised Rodomant with a call, for Romana lodged out of the palace precinct, after his patron's departure. He had quite forgotten his anger, whose subsidence was just that of wrath in all men of his temperament, as forgiving as they are sensitive. Friendship, however, had withered in the seed, not because of the anger, but between him and Rodomant it could not have grown up. Cordial acquaintance, in most cases more agreeable than enforced familiarity, remained to them, and as Rodomant had

not seen Romana *since* the flying angry hour, he was curious at thesame time that he was gratified.

"I am come to you in despair," said Romana, dashing himself into a seat, pink-faced, and semi-furious. "In despair, I shall never finish her, I cannot begin her (I have destroyed her twice), and if I can't begin, how end? There was no colour to go from at first, and now there is no expression. Out of a coffin no one ever looked so lifeless. Except for the genius of death, she is no subject at all, and done in marble, she would look, not only death-like but dead, else I would try my hand at a model, and paint from *that*. I am harassed, I have no sleep, and all my glorious colour-dreams are gone to the darkness, the devil's own place. It is not that I want to be paid, in fact she has so plagued me, that, if I ever do get through it, I will not take from Porphyro a stiver. But my fame, my name, my reputation already tampered with; what would be said if I *failed?* for, insignificant as she is as woman, being a princess, perforce the popular tongue would rattle. There is but one hope for me, and I place it in you. If anything can conquer her monotony, it is your craft; you must

come and amuse her with playing, while she sits."

"Did she order me?" asked Rodomant, eagerly, at which Romana laughed.

"Rigid propriety, what armour for you. It sits on you as uncanny as the skeleton outside the man in 'Quarle's emblems,' an old religious book. No, she did not *order*, but I asked her if she would allow it, and she instantly, of course graciously, assented. Is not her assent command? O man, in the 'body,' of this death, how worldly art thou!"

"Certainly, assent is command," said Rodomant drily, for he grudged unnecessary allusion to the subject.

So Rodomant, with pulses filled with fire, calm-bound as if with ice, by his will, to whose force iron were a non-resistant, went straightway to Romana's studio. This was a deserted pavilion in the gardens, which Porphyro had suggested to the princess would serve as such; and it was for Porphyro but to suggest—in a few hours its preparation was completed. The soft frescoes of the interior, wholly unstained by that climate, were left to adorn the walls; the glass dome was cleansed, and from it, as from a semi-sphere of

crystal, poured down the artist's light. Around, a few choice statues, fragments, models, and beauteous pictures, all from the princess's own store, were placed, and her own property was the superb easel of sandal-wood, framed in gold, and inlaid thick with minute pictures on enamelled round medallions—the enamel green. At the proper distance, too, were the legitimate raised chair, cloth-stained dais, and inevitable screen, which last, in this case, stretched all across the studio, dividing it into unequal *halves*. She was already seated, this side of the screen to Rodomant, as he entered by one of eight equi-distant doors, with grass-green blinds before them. He did not look at her the least, but cast one glance all round the half of the apartment he could scrutinise.

"What am I to play on, may it please your highness? for I see no instrument," he enquired in a comic tone, he could not have resisted then employing.

"My piano is behind the screen," she answered loftily; and as he passed her sideways to attain the edge of the screen near him, he saw, as one sees a white flower smite the vision that sought it not, amidst the colour-blossoms of the garden, her pale face altered fearfully. He had not

learned the truth—a truth few know, that no one dies of love, who carries not in him or her the germ of some disease, in itself winged direct for death, and which the unnatural and enforced demand upon vitality of any violent agitation fosters and quickens to its crisis. Nor knew he the counterfeit of all diseases, which renders even physical suffering the more intense and dread, because the vitality unimpaired gives equal strength for extra suffering. So Rodomant again thought—this time felt certain—she was going to die. This time, too, the energy of denial and repudiation swelled not in him to choke the fear. It was fixed in a desperate despair. It must be—then let the sacrifice hasten to completion; let the pure fires close around the virgin life at *once*, and wing the spirit for heaven, to its reward. Only let it be *now*, before he, the destroyer, had perjured his soul by tasting the delights of possession *unmerited*. It was like the old Hebrew story of the mother who willed her own child to live, and gave it up to false motherhood of another, to spare its life, reversed. He would have this treasure stolen by death before it was ravished by life. Virginius-like, he could himself that hour have slain her

from his sight, to destroy the power of earthly love upon her.

This fine frame of passion's least temporal (though necessarily temporary) hallucination, might have fleeted faster than it did, had he known that during all the previous (and fruitless) sittings, after Porphyro's departure, Adelaïda had invariably ordered two of her ladies, a matron and a maid, the one to read aloud, the other to embroider, in a corner of the studio; and that this day she had released them, in consideration of Rodomant's presence. Such a token of confidence in his person would not only have melted the death-apotheosis, but have further roused hopes unjustifiable, indomitable—but lately held down and numbed.

Not knowing she so honoured him, his mood led him to torture himself ruthlessly, and also to excite her to a sense of herself, as heroine of the divine tragedy he had arranged in his own anticipation. It was very seldom he sang, even to himself, and he had never in his life done so to a woman except Lady Delucy. His extraordinary voice, which, instead of compass, possessed an almost blasting power, and, instead of sweetness, a shrill clarity which made words of passion

awfully articulate, as it lent to those of love a strenuous anguish of application. This voice the princess had never heard, and guessed it no more than she saw or imagined his gifts of personal fascination, which he dexterously and honourably concealed, and which were as far more irresistible than Porphyro's as spiritual than merely animal magnetism.

"Princess," he exclaimed, tardily from behind the screen, "I wrote last night a song which I humbly hope will gratify your highness; and which, with your permission, I will give you."

"Its name, pray?" she asked, with interest, curiously contrasting with the languor of her look and colourlessness.

"A swan's song—it is dying; you know the legend."

"Pity, it is not true—think you not so, Mr. Romana? a fine subject for your brush!"

"A fine subject, indeed, for *his* stick," grumbled Rodomant to himself, "fancy the material he would lump it with. The chiseling of the feathers in chalk lustre, the sedges like a milkmaid's green hat ribbon, the shrubs on *that* side of the brook as staringly *down upon one* as the shrubs on *this* side. Don't I know?"

"Your highness compliments me too highly," broke in Romana, and scattered his pre-criticism. "The subject is scarce suited for a picture. If one drew the swan, how should one represent the proper and natural development of the muscles of the throat? Quite different in the case of a bird, provided by nature only with a cry for purposes of necessity, and a song-bird in the act of singing, wherein the muscles must be brought into visible and actual play. In short, as the swan's song is a fable, he cannot be *seen* to sing, therefore must not be so painted, for he must not be *imagined*."

"Oh," sighed Adelaïda, to her own heart; "does Porphyro hold *those* art-tenets? horrible!" and the unpleasant impression was deepened by the suggestive comic tone behind the screen.

"Mine is a she-swan. May she therefore bemoan herself? For I declare truly, that though she cannot be '*seen* to sing,' she can be heard."

Romana was shocked at this direct breach of court-breeding, and of course busily occupied himself, that he might be seen to keep aloof himself from such a charge—did not go on

painting, because he had not begun—besides the princess had fidgeted out of her attitude; but shifted his canvas, poked about with his brushes, mixed his colours till his palette was a chaos of the rainbow, and achieved such like tricks of the not perfectly self-possessed.

"Let us hear her, by all means," said Adelaïda, and settled in her attitude again; Romana fumbled for a brush, and took a long preliminary gaze—then painted.

And Rodomant sang these words, weeds of his own fancy, which, gathered for his particular charm, he prized as sacred "herb of grace," beyond any flowers of another's imagination, and which he had even originally *fancied* such as they were, not in German, but in the tongue of Belvidere—richest and rarest tone stricken from the Eolian harp of language by the windlike and wordless voice, Neccssity—which voice seems, in the case of that tongue, to have limited necessity to passion. As for the music which bore the words along to their goal of meaning, it was simple of melody, with accompaniment of long and surge-like chords, the weltering calmness of the brimming, but not stagnant, stream, drawing slowly, surely onwards, towards the sea.

Take me, oh take me, while my life is glory,—
Ere I be weary, take me to thy rest,—
Ere love be feeble or my locks be hoary,
E'en in my beauty take me to be blest.

Let me be with Thee, while my young heart pineth
For all love, all Heaven; with its first pure fire,
Through this dim mortal mine immortal shineth,
Yearns for all wisdom, with a dread desire.

Do I not seek Thee? Yea, my youth is wasting
In aspiration, struggling Thine to be,
Seems it in longing all my heart is hasting
To Heaven before me,—now is one with Thee!

Yea, at the midnight, when the dark earth sleepeth,
Watch I with Thy starlight, till I seem a star
'Lone amidst thousands—then my mortal weepeth,
Far from Thy starlight—from Thyself how far!

Young is my spirit—crowned with dewy roses—
Fresh is my life as lilies freshly blown,
Love for its sweetness and its hope reposes
On Thee, Eternal—on Thy smile alone.

Soothes not Thy love my first, last music? woven
Wildly on the waters, shivering in their reeds?
Like searching fire the skies its voice hath cloven,
Burning to *touch* the altar-light it feeds.

Dying, now dying, it touches, and I hear Thee
Wooing in darkness, whence the glory came,
Calling, Beloved, in bitter breeze to cheer me,
Blown from the deep which death I fondly name.

At the end of the first verse the princess, astonished, held her breath to listen; sat like a study of calm. At the end of the second she shuddered, rigidly repressed herself, and hung on the remaining words; but though stirless till the end as a marble phantom of herself, she changed in countenance; a void inexpression crept over it, white as the veil unperceived Death drops on the fairest faces! At last, from inexpression, the expression altered, and settled finally into a cold unmeaning terror, a scared look in the sweet blue eyes—the *mind* seemed banished from the countenance. Romana was naturally in despair, lost his court self-command for a moment—

"For pity," he cried, not said, "play something joyous, something sprightlier, at least—you are freezing her highness. And even I cannot get on; my brush is as if it had been dipped in ice—my wrist is cramped."

"Play something, dear yes!" said Rodomant, quite secure of his effect upon her. And reckless indeed were the succeeding aberrations; they can be named nothing correcter, of his daring hands, his far more daring intellect. Strong and wild as a hurricane out at sea; or

as a mind prophesying its own madness in the last sane and insane-verging passion. To the princess, however, whose idea he had succeeded in fettering, it was all yet of the swan's song, (as unlike song of swan, as poetry or song could be). To her, that great confusion of whelming harmony was the deep to which the swan had drifted; the river-banks with their freshly earth-sprung rushes, their gushes of wild-flower scent, their reminiscences of humanity in echoes from the shore—all past, all lost—the very mid-sea drenching surf shutting out its feeble death-wail from its yearning ears; and not the dead-white surf alone, but the shrieks of the drowning, the groans of the crushed between embracing icebergs, from pole to pole—the last dry gasps of those who die for water on the salt and burning waters at the thirsty Line. Then, as the strains swept again to the simple but torturing theme, she fell back upon herself, and thought of herself deliberately and horribly, as of another person dead; over whose death, and death's cause, she lamented too profoundly to melt in tears—too proudly to define lament in language. Suddenly, there was silence, and it stunned her like a sudden and altered shock of sound—be-

hind the screen. Then Romana, flushed with wrathful distress, and sadly worried between his subject and her slave, exclaimed—

"Your highness is so wonderfully good and patient, that I hesitate not to request that for the future the sittings should be continued as they were held before." And his brush, which he had grasped too tenaciously in revenge for his courtly restraint, rolled out of his fingers. How she wished that Rodomant would say something to help her,—no such thing.

"As you please—but unless you are tired, you shall not be disappointed of a sitting to day. I will do better this time—music is too exciting, after all, or excites *me* too much." She rang a hand-bell, and a page entered; him she sent to summon her ladies as before. "We will have no more music, indeed," she said, in a tone she meant to carry impression of her own vexed anger to Rodomant—or perhaps to ascertain whether he was still there. As he did not reply, nor make the slightest sound, she supposed him to have retreated through the door at the side of his screen, whose silken openings would betray no person's exit. Meantime he sat on quietly, heard the ladies come in, and the reading of a

book commence, which though a tearing fiction of the foremost class and fashion, was as interesting to him (and as he believed to her) as a work on cosmogony or a treatise on cookery.

The sitting was now over, Romana well pleased —for she had made one of those supernatural efforts in which proud women infallibly succeed; —she dismissed him to his afternoon repose,— the ladies also. Romana thought Rodomant had gone—the ladies knew not he had been there— the princess of course was certain of his departure, or she would never have said to Romana,—whose healed vanity flushed joy thereat,—"I wish to look at your pictures, the Director told me of them. May I examine that portfolio?"

"Too deeply honoured, your highness—but they are only sprigs and corner-pieces—my canvasses are unfortunately too huge to strew so fairy-like a building as is this one." And he lifted a sufficiently huge case on to the easel-ridge, did not dare to unloose the strings; and noiselessly shot out of the partition.

All was stillness in the studio then; the sun burned hotly on the roof, and the door-draperies hung calm as folds in malachite. She listened, and felt uneasy at the lack of sound, in the midst

of which a ghost would have seemed as natural an apparition as in the noon of darkness. Even a sigh of her own startled her, however, when it was emitted, then forcibly repressed. Strange that in solitude, she should be afraid to sigh. At length she touched the ribbons of the portfolio; —nervously and uncertainly placed by Romana on the supporting ridge, it lost balance instantly, and crashed on the mosaic floor—a great crash, for it was Romana's "specimen," not "incident" book. And straightway with the crash, then appeared from the side of the screen, the calm sturdy form and unimpressioned face, of Rodomant. Quiet as a servant, and with the exact proper polish of non-interest, he advanced, and like a menial automaton gathered up the stray certificates of fame—for they were scattered far and near; replaced them in the portfolio, and this upon the easel, firmly as menial fingers should. But—as it seemed,—on second thoughts, he removed the portfolio again, and put it on the firm table Romana had used for his box—then wheeled the table on its velvet-easy castors, to the princess's side;—and standing behind the table, was evidently about to remain there *like* a servant; in case she should further need him.

In the sea of her emotions tossed so high, she caught at his presence like a spar of drift-wood —evidently feared his departure.

"Do not go," she said, desperately, "I have not seen you so long; have you been ill?"

"Oh no, I am never ill, your highness; but I was not sent for, and without such sign of favour, I had no right to appear, having already appeared too often."

"I believe I have been ill myself," she said, still desperately, "if you were not; the heats are great this year. I am, however, perfectly well now; and therefore I do not understand—Oh, that you would not tax my patience as you do! What was the meaning of your singing that song to me? very inferior to any other of your songs; but what was the *meaning*?"

"So obvious and simple, that on my life I know not how to explain it."

"No swan's song, certainly," she said, in a lowered, helpless voice. Then imploringly, still helplessly, "What makes you think I am going to die? that *I* ought to think so? You would not say so, or imply it, if you did not know it. Alas, for me!" and she cast her eyes round at the walls, as though they prisoned her, and she

was thence to be led forth for execution. "Alas! for with your genius and your integrity, you must then have the second sight, the gift of prophesy which is given to so few, in those few unerring. Yet, how cruel of you to tell me so! I might at least have not felt it till it came, then had my hopes lasted until my hour. And now you tear them from me, ungrateful as you are! Did I ever rend your peace of mind out of your bosom? did I ever kill you in anticipation?"

Rodomant's hallucination dropped from him, less like a mist than as a husk, which left him spirit-bare and shivering in the face of his insane selfishness, his blind and ruthless cruelty. He fell low on trembling knees, as rapidly arose, for near enough, and looking upwards as he knelt, he could detect the drops on her brow, delicate as beads of dew in the lily's bosom, and the shadow of death, which the pure soul ever meets and conquers before the substance, over her whole resigned face and drooping figure.

"Great heaven! God is my witness, my meaning was not that, at least not so. I allowed my own evil imagination to outrage my feelings, in revenge of them, I suppose. It was wicked, audacious, anything but what you think it! I

was resolved to exorcise the hideous travesty of an idea, held by Romana, that your highness was like a Madonna. I thought, if I can but give that common-place a tragic burst, all will be well, so far as that the fat Catholic mother (Eve second), of all living, will be flung out of the possible scale. Pardon, pardon, O good and great princess!"

"It is a disgraceful weakness in me," she answered, still trembling, but no longer with the quake of terror—the Strong so near her had quieted that. "I ought to be glad, were I to die. And God knows I should be *thankful*—if no one knew it; if I could *die* a nameless and unheeded alien in this land, without the trouble of leaving it, for I am past that—I think. If I might drop into the grave secure that only earth should cover me—unrecognised and uninscribed. But no—still not yet—not now, nor for some time either." She made a long pause, but her tone still raised at the last words, denoted that she meant—even meant to *say*—more. So far as that, her pride was spared—if not her meaning.

"Because," said Rodomant, very calmly, and the calmness stilled her trembling, "You would not choose to *have* said, what might and probably

would be said, if you died now. You would not bear it said, because it would not be true—and a lie would keep even your divine soul from rest."

"What would not be true? Indeed, is half-sincerity the truth on *your* part? If I desire you to tell me, you can surely have no fear."

"I have no fear for myself; it is for you, princess—it is because, if you command me and I confess the very truth, you will disdain yourself for having commanded me. And I so often, nay constantly, disdain *myself*, that I know it is a detestably unpleasant feeling, and would not that through my heedlessness you incurred it."

"I understand you, I believe—you are right. I wish I could *prove* you wrong in any instance; but *yet* I never have found you mistaken; I yet hope I may. I suppose you mean, that if a woman of my age, unmarried, dies without obvious disease, she will be accused of dying—for love." Her chaste-cold dignity, recovered now, made the words a mere abstraction in their sound.

"Certainly, I meant so. I speak quite plainly, more honest than so thinking to myself alone. As a servant who sees urgent danger to his service's sovereign—for instance, if flames wrap

round her sleeping-chamber, he rushes through the barrier, unbidden, and tears her from the pillow—his own arms carry her to safety. Or a snake creeps near her under the flowers she is gathering—he plucks the monster from her contact, even though in so doing his hand shall touch her own. So near, so daring, such a home-thrust is my warning. Die not, O great princess! die never, so long as it is in your power to live. To die for love is glory; a maiden's palm, a widow's crown of wifehood—*if* he who loved them went before them and called them after him, through the irresistible necessity for those who love, and separate—to meet again. But let no woman die for any whom she loves with a love beyond *his* love. Or eternally must the spirit pine, unmated."

"That is nonsense, what you last assert; no just spirit will pine eternally. Perhaps than 'mating' there are joys more excellent, as more celestial. Pity, you obscure your own best notions with what I think a false philosophy." No heavenly mood affected her at this moment; but Rodomant had not rejoiced for a long time as at the reaction of her behaviour. Still pale, but haughty from head to foot, with tossed head,

and upper lip that curled from the under like the petals of the over-blown carnation, and golden eyebrows arched, she leaned back in her chair, and fell again on the portfolio—not trifling with it either, but taking out each board and examining it deliberately, passing each one to Rodomant over her shoulder, as he stood behind her seat. Mute as a servant, and as untiring, he continued to hold in both his hands the momently increasing bundle; but at length she came to the last of all the drawings—the portfolio was empty; she held the drawing still—self-contempt—unbearable to such a nature—dropped its "deadly henbane" on her consciousness. But at the first instilment of the poison, her whole being rejected it. Truth itself as she was, she could not endure a false view of herself even for a moment; her nobility, innate and perfect, cleared every barrier of pride.

"I believe you unjustified in what you say; but that you may be aware I claim and hold my right as a woman, I will tell you that I have put far from me every thought of Porphyro; nor do I choose, even in your mind, to be coupled with him—understand this. No dishonour—not the shade of blame attaches to him; the dishonour

is my dream, and the blame—no shade—is mine; for I yielded to homage paid me naturally as a woman, as though it were the worship consecrated to the woman chosen only."

"Lady!" said Rodomant, still behind her chair; she started, never had she been addressed so nearly as a woman,—"I am not worldly-wise, but out of the world I know much. I wish to speak—nay, more, I will speak, and then beseech you to banish me for ever; to fulfil, in fact, *his* wishes, not because they are his, but *mine*. Porphyro loves you, princess, as well, as honestly, as ardently as he can love. Porphyro delays his own desire, and suffers—delights to suffer; the obstinate, who defy love as the infidel defies God, absolutely *delight* to suffer at their own will; but, mark me, he would not choose to suffer, nor endure delay, were he not certain that, at the instant he shall determine, he *is* to ask and to receive. Vehement as is his passion, another passion chains it; and cold are these eternal chains—no fire can unrivet, no rose-enwoven fetters *hide* them from the heart of the woman he is doomed to marry with or without love. That cold strong passion is his master-will; he wills not to cross it—incapable of self-denial in

the worldly, as he is in the *least* worldly sentiment. And if he might—oh! princess, were he still permitted, he would not own you as he *is*—in his own esteem—a woman's own inferior."

"Oh, this ceaseless tampering with the truth! —the one truth faithful to me, of which, as it clings to me, I am certain."

"Hear me yet, and bear with me—as the truth denying yours. He will not take you—he would not endure your devotion, till the world should own him—shall, as he knows it will, own him chief—till he himself shall raise you among nations, not you him. He would not take your *help* so far—he would not bear the *gratitude* he then must feel."

"You will not tempt me," she said, in that tone of firm tenderness, with which a perfect woman *denies* the truth from lips that imply the falsehood of the One to whom she is always true, till he prove *himself* from his *own* lips, false.

"You will not tempt me against my faith. How can I help it, if I believe him?—helplessly." Strange, so to thrust her helplessness upon another man! Now, Rodomant, still religiously behind her, took no measures from her womanly, half-lost, and entirely-appealing look; if he had

seen it, he would have withdrawn without speaking. But, with whole intention to withdraw entirely—he believed, oh, presumptuous! not eternally—from her presence, he was determined to tell her his whole mind, untinctured with a warm ray from his heart; he could resolve upon the first intention, the latter eluded him, as for so many of us, happily, it eludes the made-up minds of philosophic men.

"Is it, O princess — loyally beloved and honoured,—is it not as unloyal, as dishonourable, for a man to keep back his suit in words,—declaring his love by sighs, his prepossession by presumptuous glances,—as it would be for a man who loved in vain, and knew it—knew that he loved in vain for earth,—to declare it openly to his own soul? Souls are not bodies, princess; and I think some shall meet in Heaven, face to face, embracing without fear, who on earth were intercepted by their bodies, or their bodies' miserable glory—Rank,—from meeting soul to soul, in the poor flesh soul glorifies." A noble, yet strangely peaceful expression, covered his large brows; his passionate eyes were strangely peaceful too. Yet he gazed only on the braids back dropping of her golden hair—and she, she saw him not. She

dared not face him, yet could not have defined, and if questioned, would have denied that proud and timorous love defiance. But with an unprecedented gesture of kindliness and grace, she turned back her hand, half threw it over her shoulder. Rodomant would have died before he embraced it, but he smiled upon it, as the father of the first-born smiles on the vague, sweet new born face.

Swiftly, almost angrily, she withdrew her hand. "I wished," she said, in an accent of fiery but by no means strong resentment—"to TAKE farewell of you. We will not meet again. I thank you, and shall not forget you, but we will not meet. On earth I mean, of course; all friends will meet in heaven. Now leave me, I forgive you."

Oh, glorious exile for Rodomant! proud error crowning love's emergency. She would not condemn Porphyro from any other lips than his own. She still loved him—why then *fear* another? he too a servant! and Porphyro her master, self chosen, long desired.

CHAPTER V.

The princess kept her word, or Rodomant. sought not to countermand it, they did not meet. Had he persisted in presenting himself before her, it is little likely she would have persisted in her determination not again to see him until they met, as friends shall meet, in heaven. But he rigidly restricted himself to the necessary offices of his position, in which she could not be said to be concerned, except ostensibly; for though, as her servant, his blazon remained untarnished in title, it was virtually extinguished in her father's claims upon him—these actual and inevitably entailed.

It has been said, we know not what we can bear until the full measure of our appointed burden is

dropped upon us. Many accept the meed of suffering in patience—blessed power derived from temperament the slackly strung. Few, but those perfectly, achieve the victory over suffering in courage, gift of iron predominating in the blood. And one or two in every thousand, beat back and defy suffering with pride, so long as an atom of pride's essence remains to them unevaporated. For pride is a non-during agent. Then at the last gasp foiled, seemingly crushed down into a mass obtuser and more inert than clay, such spirits break all bonds asunder, and by might of passion, the Spirit's incorporeal strength, they spring to life again, the vitality of suffering; a life, if less lasting than eternity, yet sustaining to the farthest verge of time.

There is yet another class, both despised and prized, perhaps both inordinately, for its exceptionalism. Of its individuals, there are not one or two in every thousand, but in every hundred thousand, perhaps, a single instance, rare as the aloe among blossoms, the phœnix among winged fables. This is the organisation of the ideal, as strictly opposed to the skilful and creative genius. Delicately irritable, it is at the same time victoriously strong; vehemently impassionate, it is sen-

sitive even to *itself*. Its impressions, vivid to pain, fade not like the vivid impressions of other temperaments, but are permanent in full intensity. Their very memories are not embalmed, but living. Far more securely than men of ordinary prudence, such a being *reserves* its impulses, until certain of their direction, whether towards fruition or disappointment. And it is less pride that influences him in the concealment of great desires unauthorised, than the ardent spiritual aspiration after sacrifice, that dream of the ideal oftener realised than any dream of any other dreamer. Meantime the mortal error and the human fault, the peculiar flaw of this organisation, which prevent its being either desirable, or perfectly admirable, while they render its conduct an enigma to the world, and convey to the puritanic a warning fear; are the *moods* inexpedient for time and for society—inutile on behalf of the multitude, a perplexing charm even to the sympathising and appreciative few—by which such temperaments are distinguished. As for their own sufferings, they are agonies no skill or precaution are able to blunt, but ever calmly borne to outward eyes, not patiently *within*, however; and entailing weakness, manifold, mysterious in-

explicable, which mars symmetry, and rasps the fulness from the edge of beauty, should such a one be born with either; which saps slowly, slowly, never unto death by *itself*, however, the sound health of blood, and body, and brain; while the nerves chafed down, made naked to the quick, respond too sharply, suddenly, to every demand upon them, great and small; and when subjected to extraordinary shock, or long inevitable pressure, give awful signs, interpreted by fools, semi-physiologists, and some sane men, as tokens near upon that end of suffering—madness.

Neither such extraordinary shock, nor so long an inevitable pressure can be classed or described with precision that might enable any to guard against or baffle either. Both may spring from any cause sufficient to affect sensation through emotion. And beings liable to them are, of all the creatures of humanity, the least selfish, or selfishly provident, or prospective. Such was Rodomant, the very king and type of such a temperament and organism. He had proposed to himself the most perfect and unbetrayed endurance of his own set task; he had laid securely, in his own esteem, his plan for permanent self-

sacrifice. And it was easy and safe so long as excitement—no more a continuous concomitant of strong feeling, than fever of disease—lasted. Swiftly extinguished, as flame whose feeding fuel is spent, was such excitement—it scarcely endured until two suns had risen and set after his exile from presence of her he was born and only lived to serve. Then the reality of existence became less like a weight or burden, than a blank of hope, of expectation—it even seemed as though despair were too definite a torment to haunt the empty being. As the firmament without the sun, could one still imagine light abroad, or as the universe without its maker—could one disbelieve actually his existence; was now Rodomant's state of consciousness. He looked back now through his experience, in which the queen and angel of his destiny was concerned, with amazement at himself for having suffered at all, when he was permitted to see her, and not deprived of hope when the permission was timely suspended. Spiritual enough to be able fully and rapturously to inhale as it were her spiritual fragrance, through the medium of personal, if ever so reserved, communion, he was far too passionate to be able to perceive that spiritual

emanation, cut off from her presence altogether; it may in fact be doubted whether those passionately attached can ever attain perfect communion of spirit in absence, for as they meet in the love-glorified body, so the flesh yearns for the flesh in separation, as truly as the spirit for the spirit, and as nobly. And while flesh and spirit are bound together, as on earth, each is necessary to the other, and neither perfect of itself.

Not only his own selfish part in this forced absence pained him—he could now be of no more service than a bread-fruit tree in the Pacific isles—to *her*. Were she ill, he would not have the chance to detect the earliest and medicable symptoms—were she to die, as it now seemed possible she might, in punishment for his blasphemous fancy—he would only hear her death announced, as in a thousand ears of those who loved her not it would be announced—and with her death forgotten.

Great awful woes, no more than simple small ones, come singly, as has been said. Soon another terror fell upon him, and *this* one paralyzed his pride that volition had no power to rouse it. The moment he *tried*—it had never before caused effort—to compose again, he was

balked, as light balks the blind, as the sweet warm sunshine balks the dying, too cold to *feel* it. It was not that material failed him—on the contrary, themes, operas, masses, great orchestral skeletons, swarmed, mocking, in his brain. But when he would have seized one and dismissed the rest, the whole eluded him together, a phantom crowd. Again, endeavouring to poise his mental perception, that reeled like a drunkard's vision, back rushed the ideas in their undisciplined and whirling multitude, producing of the brain a super-vital action, like the result on a pulse in fever of stimulants too rashly imbibed. With a desperate but resolved self-denial, he threw all the implements aside, and would have simply EXISTED, till the faculties fell into rank, and the violent reaction re-acted again in order, would have simply existed—but for the great truth,—superseding fact and imagination,—which directly the intellect resolved on non-employment, sprang like lightning across the storm of consciousness, and died not like lightning, but endured to dazzle and beguile from rest:—the Truth, alike pertaining to heavenly and earthly devotion, that love cannot "slumber nor sleep."

Day and night, therefore, the sleepless certainty

possessed him. Nor was this vigilance, albeit the devotion of self, entirely selfish in devotion. Rodomant,—not the first man whose habits love's rule has infringed on—even altered,—began to take an interest in politics and to devour their chronicles dated from a given region, written in a given dialect. If there was one speciality of modern civilisation he loathed, it was the universal prevalence—plague he had been used to term it—of newspapers. Now he courted them, and they became his guides, his instructors in the familiar science of Predominance. He discovered, by the way, in these readings, that predominant persons are alone thus ephemerally embalmed, also that as many insignificant as remarkable persons predominate in the annals of diurnally celebrated hero-worship. This was a discovery by the way, for often he bemoaned himself on the length and depth of rubbish he had to examine and sift, in order to discover those grains of rarity more precious and less common than gold—items of information about the person or subject that happens to interest one. Now Rodomant forced himself to the laborious achievement entirely to discover what Porphyro was said to have done, or to *mean*—

he drew his own conclusions from the cloud of witnesses encompassing this most tangible mystery that ever baffled humanity. Certainly, many assertions made one day were contradicted the next, even by the press which held Porphyro next its heart, that of Parisinia;—also reports were spread which to Rodomant's honour he discredited: —to his *honour*, for he had anticipated, and wished to believe them—but repudiated them for *her* sake, whose destiny their fulfilment would darken. They were reports, now uncertain and sybilline, now oracular, and attested of the possible exaltation of Porphyro to the highest rank man has dared to invent and invest himself with, under the ruler of heaven and earth.

As far as Rodomant's safety in his position was concerned, it was happy for him that he had composed with such unmitigated industry before thecris is of his love. He had endless creations, both sketched out and clearly arranged—filled in, he would have said. But the prince's curiosity was insatiable, and he had the mental avidity of the intellect diseased, an appetite unnatural, that would only gorge what was new. So Rodomant wondered, with a sort of fatal calmness, what would happen when he had produced the last

sheet from his finite store. He remembered Porphyro's words about his fame—or genius—exhausted on its "trial cruise,"—spoken all those long months ago; now he felt as though that genius were becalmed upon a tideless and a shoreless sea. As for his fame—alas! yet bewailing it bitterly as Israel's mothers wept their slaughtered first-born, he foresaw not the celestial remission of certain sorrows that very bereavement should purchase him. For his fame was dead, or so he deemed it; was it not rather that it had never lived? Yet the poor soul, crowned with those delicate palm-shadows, which shelter the brows so proudly in youth's first burning summer-day, can only suffer in silence when they fall and dissolve, not even waiting to wither with the autumn, like forest-leaves of earth. They can only suffer in *silence*, the noon-heats beating on the head, for pride never fails the intellect, though love may usurp it in the heart.

It is a mistake that genius inevitably lacks common sense; on the contrary, that homely but precious instinct is ever wanting in proportion to mental deficiency. Rodomant, once assured that he could be of no further use, where he was, to the only being he cared to serve or please—

and not only so, but the only being, who, he now discovered, had made him prize his present position, arranged with himself to go, to return to his own rank, and exalt—if his faculties regained their rule—no longer himself as an artist, but his art. Long prostration and severer penalties might await him still, but his chances would be greater of recovering *himself*—that self-possession which the wise man clings to, and that self-respect which saves so many minds from madness. Free of the degradation of a tyrant's bounty, he could even endure poverty; that phantom he had feared in his first fame might intercept its fulness, but which now, without further experience, save from *within*, he had learned to appreciate as a better friend, and a nobler foe than wealth.

Now it might seem very easy for Rodomant to withdraw—indeed, how should he be liable to detention more than any other servant who works for wages, and desires to change his place? He could not tell himself why he dreaded to ask permission, for he knew he must do that, or thought so then; but yet he had a presentiment which he disliked, but could not disdain—for his presentiments were always prophetic—that it

would be as difficult to loose his chains of service, as though they had been fetters of the same temper as those with which the prince loaded certain of his servants, who had the misfortune to be born his subjects too. Determined to get free, however, and desirous to attain liberty without scandal, which might possibly implicate another, Rodomant finally settled with himself to request leave of his patron to pay a visit to his mother—a request so natural, it seemed impossible should be either refused or suspected.

But the prince suspected all men—even court-musicians. Rodomant knew not, either, that one of his predecessors had been imprisoned on suspicion of a tendency to communism, betrayed in a letter to a friend, which, written in cipher, had its characters detected as *secret*, through the thin post paper enclosing it. Nor knew Rodomant that, although this person escaped, he had in the very act of escape rendered such suspicion more likely to fall upon other persons of the same profession. Rodomant's wit, daring, and non-dependence on others, seemed to invest him further with suspicion—just such a one as he, multiplied by thousands, created those social nuisances called secret societies; and these all

had for their foundation an improper desire for liberty, both of action and of opinion—they all detested autocracy, which they named tyranny. Such common-place objections as these sufficed to render Rodomant's request improper, and in its assumed reason an imposture. He had prepared a respectful but not obsequious speech, in which to make known his desire; he was amazed at the aspect of the prince on its reception; the latter turned pale, and gazed weakly around him —there was unsteadiness and at the same time animal-like eagerness in his voice as he replied—

"What on earth, or under earth, do you want to go for?"

"To see my mother, as I had the honour to tell your highness."

"So you said—that is impossible; sons are not in these days so filial; then, you have only been here a year and eight months. Besides—how do I know you have a mother? No, no!" changing his tone on a sudden, with the sugar-like lymph of a temperament whose amiable moods were more dangerous than its anger. "I cannot spare you; that is more than a sufficient answer. No one has filled your place,

nor would, so well. You are therefore fixed in it—a marked point, too—an envied one, as you ought to be grateful enough to acknowledge. But you possess the hairy hide of genius, alas! we must expect no amenities."

"I know the value of my position," said Rodomant, too earnestly for good policy.

The prince brought his hand down on the table with force that shook it, and also pained his own velvet palm. Rubbing it, he exclaimed viciously, "I do not choose you to go—that is enough, let us hear no more about it. Now, what have you done the last week—it is, I believe, so long since I last sent for you."

But, alas! as we have said, Rodomant had done literally nothing; he endeavoured to annihilate the void impression, however, by all sorts of sudden inventions, clever enough to have deceived an art-academy, but which the prince detected—too clever himself not to do so, and which he detested, too passionless to endure passion's vagaries, out of the restrictions of art. He instantly fancied Rodomant had so disported himself on purpose to disgust him, or rather in a moment it struck him that the restlessness and the idleness sprang from the same

source—a mercenary inclination. He was prodigal, if not liberal, with the finances wrung like their life's blood from his poorer subjects by taxation, fine, and forfeiture. "What is your salary?" he enquired, knowing quite well, of course, but very glad to shift the cause of suspicion: his tone was gay. Rodomant stared—he was alarmed, he knew not why. "Your salary!" exclaimed the other, impatient now. Rodomant had £400 a year, reckoning in Saxon, with perquisites that added another hundred to the sum. He mentioned it in the current terms of Belvidere.

"We will for the future appoint it £700; but there must be no remission of duties, as of late. There will be a special chance for you to distinguish yourself soon—you are of course aware, and will be prepared."

Rodomant bowed with awful stateliness, an awful sensation affected him, which he could not have defined, as he suddenly reflected on that chance for self-distinction, of which it was true he had heard, but which he heeded no more than one heeds the reversion of day and night at one's own antipodes—it seemed to have as little to do with *him*. It was the prospective jubilee of the

prince, or rather his fiftieth birthday, to be so celebrated; his worshippers, who were in fact the men who, nearest to him, feared him most, had devised the pageant, and caused it to be noised abroad. Rodomant, however, cared little to dispute with him at this moment—and assumed irreproachable propriety. "Your highness would honour me unspeakably by a *hint*, at least, of your commands for me on that auspicious occasion; they could not be too deeply or too long considered."

"A grand mass," said the prince, hastily—giving a curious glance over his shoulder, then drawing in his breath. Rodomant knew the sign; a semi-sybil or half caste gipsy, who had in part tended the infancy of the prince, had uttered when dying a mystical enunciation with reference to his end, that, should he survive the fiftieth anniversary of his birth, he would behold his children's children. The possibility of his perishing on that day was, however, not further stated; and in consequence the prince, who had been born at noon, was anxious to get over that *hour*, and till its end meant to remain in seclusion, while the few drops in his veins, that were dregs of a race once supreme, forced him to resolve

upon a celebration of that era, it having been suggested to him by those who were, as well as himself, privy to the oracle. He would repudiate this by a special solemnity, and an act of sublime courage.

" A grand mass," he repeated, " in token of gratitude to Heaven, and reverence for the Church. " For performance in the cathedral—not the chapel—remember. I expect you will astonish us on the occasion."

Dismissed sooner than usual, and followed to the door by scrutinising eyes, Rodomant left the prince in a frame bordering on obstinacy. He was not only resolved on flight, but that his flight should be immediate. It may be said, was it so surpassingly difficult to escape? Surely, it required no extraordinary ingenuity to leave the palace,—it was only to walk out of it, and return no more: of course, he only chose eccentric means because, in common with most minds of genius, he preferred exceptional to straightforward conduct. Not at all; he knew, not that it was difficult, but impossible, to escape at pleasure. His presentimental terrors, accomplished, held him by an iron spell besides. But the actual impossibility consisted in the literal fact that the palace

was a masked prison—it would have been as easy to quit unnoticed a real and open-faced one. As we said before, soldiers in domestic disguise guarded stairs, corridors, corners; porters, mailed under velvet, kept every entrance; outside, the sentries double deep, at dreary day and wakeful night, moved on. And as for the windows of Rodomant's own rooms, they were so near the roof, that to glance from them to the marble flat of the highest terrace turned dizzy even his strong head. It was a fact that he had often passed out of the palace unnoticed; but how long would even *that* possibility endure? for once infected with the prince's desire to detain him, the careless or mocking myrmidons of tyranny—careless and mocking for Rodomant as a mere toy-appendage of the court, cheaper purchased than themselves—would swiftly change to careful and grave individuals, ready to pounce upon him with arrest. For such service they were *sold*, and would have killed him before they let him go.

Rodomant walked wildly up and down, drew deep but inward sighs, felt half stifled with the fancy that those superb strong precincts were petrifacations of his own despair. He had taken

off his shoes, actually afraid, at that distance from the royal centre, to be *heard* to pace in meditation, or semi-madness. If an indirect course must be adopted, why did he not apply to Adelaida? if not in person, why not by letter? Surely she, without collusion or hypocritic demeanour who lived a life in contradiction of her father's existence, opposed tacitly, yet openly, to his character and conduct, his habits, his very state—could have managed to procure for Rodomant a safe and speedy exit. Truly and painfully as she would have felt his loss, were he actually about to depart, she would with all her heart and skill have endeavoured to gratify him, and succeeded. But Rodomant would have passed his whole life in that palace-prison, or in a narrower one, rather than have addressed to her a line, a word, or conveyed to her a hint of his need through any other person. This last arrangement might have been readily effected; for Romana, still in the near vicinity, was yet admitted to her presence, and also now and then continued to flit across Rodomant's dull or frenzied evenings, like a brilliant moth.

Rodomant knew he could send a message by Romana to the princess; on Romana no suspi-

cion had fallen, and he could behave amiably—even gaily, while at the same time he was sincere; in his transient stays he only beheld the gold and gemmed surface of the hollow false regality. No, Rodomant would never again communicate with her, his pride exulted absurdly in this decision. She had banished him, and—shame to him for that—he had a savage gratification in obeying her will to the letter—nay, beyond it, he flattered himself—he would not (he stated inwardly) have gone to her, had she sent for him.

Providence—or a lowlier fate—sent Romana to his rooms that evening. The painter was amazed at his agreeability—he was charming, loquacious, but extremely calm. After a variety of topics had been touched, he asked carelessly, "Have you finished the princess? I suppose so—it is almost an insult to your industry to put the question."

"It is ended—yes, at last."

"How soon to go then? I mean *it*, not you?" Rodomant was dismayed momently, he feared it already *gone*.

"Oh, I cannot tell—she tries me sorely with her caprices about the frame, she will not let it

stand in that provided by Porphyro, 'regardless of expense.' I will say that for the director, whom many accuse of 'stinge.' I am on her father now, he takes much less space, I mean *time;* he is an effigy, and will not be expected to have expression."

"How soon shall you have finished both?"

"In ten days, and be off by that time, too; I cannot do—or rather, have not done what I expected here, after all. But, as doctors tell one, the benefit of sea air is not experienced till one returns inland, I trust it will be the case that the beauty and colour of this matchless climate will impregnate my future to fruition—my present sorely lacks it."

"Does the prince like his own picture?" asked Rodomant, in agony at his errant allusions.

"He likes *hers* better, which is a good thing for me, because he will of course praise it to Porphyro. He is, I believe, proud of her picture, because I have contrived to infuse into it a certain resemblance to *himself*, without marring *hers*. As she is considered a handsome woman, his vanity is gratified, I imagine the parental instinct to be inexcitable."

"Oh, you end in admiring her then?" Rodo

mant was too pre-occupied with his sterner purpose to be ruffled at the idea, which would have infuriated him a short month back.

"Her character, certainly; she is one of the shining lights, futile as all female missionaries, and she-ameliorators on a large scale, must be, but sterling *good* herself. Her beauty is nought —insufficient even for a study."

"How much will you have for it?" Rodomant, inwardly reckless, held himself outwardly in check—his design formed, he could afford it time to ripen for security. "I mean, how much will Porphyro give you?"

"Not settled."

"How much shall you ask?"

"I should have asked two hundred, if required to settle beforehand. If I had pleased myself, and painted quickly, I would have taken one hundred and fifty; but as it has spoiled much time, and I hate the result, I shall ask—and receive of course in *this* case—two hundred and fifty."

"Not too much—not enough indeed—you are *certain* that is all you intend to take?"

"Surely. What a singular question—singularly put too—by *you*."

Quite natural, Rodomant thought, in the event of his eccentric resolve achieved. This was neither more nor less than to destroy the princess's picture. Of course, (so reasoned he) for such a crime he should be banished; for it was a crime he could sufficiently *defend* in its confession, from possibility of affiliation on *treason* as its parent. He could but be banished —exile was the only punishment to which in such a case a sovereign could condescend. Far other would have been the result, he considered, had he determined to destroy the prince's own portrait; that might, and indeed must, have attached to him the suspicion of disloyalty towards, if not design upon, the person of the original. The prince did not care enough for his child to associate her with the royal idea, any more than the reality. Then, what triumph to annihilate the work founded falsely on the artist's prejudice—what glory to denude Porphyro of its possession, already reckoned on by him so audaciously. It was indeed this last consideration of all, that thrust Rodomant to the commission of a deed which his innate nobility would have repudiated, in its natural and

healthful condition. The mood, in which he wrought his morbid vengeance *selfishly*, was neither healthful nor indeed natural; and the moments, in which he projected it so swiftly, were haunted by phantoms of disease, if not disease; prompted by a disordered, if not disorganised intelligence.

"So she did not like the frame—why not?"

"Too many insignia of 'rule,'—both hers and his. Crowns and laurel-garlands; stars and flowers, chiefly the iris and violet—certainly nothing prettier than the latter. Nor are crosses wanting; her 'order' is not overlooked. The unfortunate portrait is at present frameless — I have sent for the other frame to Genoa."

The news of the repudiation of the frame, also the description of it, gave Rodomant a gleam of grim pleasure; a sunbeam on a Golgotha, for his mood, with all its anticipation, was ghastly too.

"So, where is the picture in the meantime?"

"In the studio, still; there is no damp there; I almost wonder, for the sake of its future possessor, she did not retain it in her own rooms."

"I am warm," said Rodomant, after some minutes' taciturnity, which made Romana rise to his feet—prepare to go. "I will walk out with you to see this portrait—it is not late."

CHAPTER VI.

It was early—for warm as it was, the shortest days of Belvidere were close at hand; a balmy sweetness, like our softest spring, was all it knew of winter. Rodomant, in going forth companioned by Romana, did the wisest thing he could to elude suspicion, even if in that short time it was possible that suspicion could have spread.

"You may thank me," said Romana, at the bottom of the pavilion stair, "for letting you see my work. I would not let a fool, nor what is called a brother-artist—Cain is symbol for such a one and the whole fraternity,—I say I would not let such see a work of mine by candle-light; they would not allow the truth, that my colours stand that fade-all test."

Rodomant would have esteemed the moon's light sufficient for his contemplation, but he dared not say so. Romana vaulted up the steps; the pavilion was raised by them several feet from the ground, besides being placed on an eminence, and clad from its marble margin to the level ground with myrtle spires.

Rodomant suddenly beheld a green glare through all the eight narrow arches blinded with grass-tinted silk, that contained the windows. "Come up," he heard Romana say, the latter having, by means of a match from his cigar-case, lighted the chandelier suspended from the central ceiling-point, whose alabaster branches were furnished with tapers, wax-white as themselves. Rodomant, giddy with prescience, ran up hastily, as Romana was drawing from the portrait its covering. Rodomant gave a glance, gasped inwardly, and closed his eyes. Thenceforth, in his esteem, there was not only pardon for his intention, but virtue in its fulfilment; for this he yearned but to be alone. From this moment Romana's presence only strengthened his desire for vengeance; *before* the artist had touched his generosity, pained him, though he dreamed not a moment of relenting in his purpose.

"I shall not go at present, it is so cool; you can, I suppose, leave me here?"

"Gladly, that is to give you any comfort, loser as I shall be of your company. I cannot stop, I am sick of the picture, and if I remained too long might perhaps destroy it."

Strange unconscious utterance of its doom! Rodomant was very glad to think that the picture would not be regretted by *him*. Porphyro could not suffer for its loss too much to please him; on the contrary. Romana went out nodding, with a fresh cigar between his lips. Rodomant crept in front of the picture, and glared at it as like a wild beast as he could look under any circumstances. So far he might be pardoned; for an honest and faithful—not to say ideal—lover, the portrait was sufficient to sadden, to anger, to disgust. Yet *clay* never received more homage, devotion so exclusive. It was a perfect and a successful study of human flesh—finer than Raphael, and ripened beyond Rubens. It was a fleshly exaggeration, however, of Adelaïda's facial image, whose indwelling and out-shining spirit it was that made it fairest of the fair. The flesh in the portrait had conquered the spirit—not a ray was reflected from the eyes, whose living

sweetness was at once so heavenly and so human; here colour in them annihilated light. The frail fairness was buried under layers of elaborate tint; the faint rose-shadows were represented purpureal. The slender form of the countenance, too sudden in point for oval, was fitted out—mellowed into stoutness. The lips, so fine and curling, were painted the colour of the robin's breast—a coral-orange—and pouted pertly. The very cheeks looked fruit-like, as they showed against the sick sere-background. Last of all—oh! crowning desecration! in the hair had Romana immortalised his fancy name, as if on oath. "The golden net to entrap the hearts of men," fair Portia boasted even in her "counterfeit,"—not so Adelaïda. Hers was conserved in carefully imitated red—perfect red; no golden glow nor shadow. Those golden hairs! which Rodomant adored and cherished, which were precious each to him as, to the Father of all-seeing love, are the hairs He numbers alike on the brightest and the dullest head.

Rodomant stood about ten minutes, fascinated at once by the hatred with which the work inspired him, and the delicious terror of his own anticipations. Suddenly, he drew the sword which he

carried at his side, which though never it might wave in battle, should do him dearer service. It flashed like the maiden meteor of a warrior's fame, as he plunged it into the canvas, not once, but again, again, and yet again, till it was slashed into countless ribbons that strewed the floor all round him.

The very shock of accomplishment seemed to disturb his spirit, like a stone flung suddenly into water. In wide dull rings his senses seemed scattered astray — closing nearer, their return dazzled him, and he felt as though he should swoon. When calm returned, his perception woke fully to the fact. What fact? What phantom? Was he, in revenge for *his* vengeance, haunted? Haunted—after all. Or was that vision the glimmering of all we love restored to us, beyond Death's twilight stream?—No ghost—it was herself by his side. Pale,—it did not seem with the colourless tension of terror, but sorrow and great surprise, and a mingling shadow of a new, an unknown passion; all trembled on her changing face, while a mysterious discomposure pervaded her air, she shrank from him as he turned on her his vivid eyes, whose glances questioned as they glittered. And as he saw her shrink,

his wrath, his fresh excitement at her sudden presence, quailed to anguish. Was it in anger, or dislike, she placed those few feet of air between them? Alas, he recollected in a flash what reason had the beloved of Porphyro, *who also loved him*, to entertain both rage and detestation. But both were so unlike her; why then that distance of hers, which appalled him like the chill of an eternal solitude?

As he gazed on her even, he sank on his knees, then bowed his head, and shut out her aspect and the light, with both his hands fast pressed upon his burning eyes.

"Pardon, oh, pardon, have mercy, my princess. I was not master of myself; I think indeed that, if I was not mad, I had an excuse as mighty."

"Pardon, why should I pardon? you have not offended me." Her voice was hushed and inward; his pulses leaped, then paused as though to follow her meaning into her being's recesses. But he did not interpret the tone, his honour was strung too high, nor, with all his absorbing passion, was he even a moment selfish.

"I know that I have offended, though I know not *how* far I am pardonable, More than all, it angers me against myself that I have brought you *here*."

"Ah, I was indeed frightened; I thought the place was on fire, the windows shone out so suddenly, I saw them from my window in the convent. And, hoping to save the picture, I came directly."

Still the low small voice, the manner hesitant and unfamiliar.

"To save the picture—ah, then your highness regrets it *as* a work. No, no—that cannot be," vivaciously, as he rose, and spurned the canvas fragments with his feet. "Porphyro is balked of his precious possession, knowing not its value. He is therefore the only one to complain."

"I do not understand your mood—nor why you came—nor why you discuss what it is impossible for you to defend." Here she assumed a haughtiness too obviously *assumed* to take the slightest effect on her hearer.

"I always thought you just, princess—as well as merciful—most women have not sufficient sense to form judgments, and few are merciful. Being both, I wonder you condemn unheard."

"How can there be anything to explain—you simply destroyed the work of a brother artist, because it displeases your own taste, which may, like mine also, be incorrect."

"But it displeases him too—I took care to

find out that—and also what it is worth, I am going to pay him. I am quite certain, princess, that you are glad it is destroyed; but you are afraid to tell me so. If Romana had been more proud than vain—proud as a musician,—*I* should not have had to destroy it."

She smiled, and turned aside with her head to hide something besides a smile a blush, very slight, but which her gesture rendered detectible to Rodomant, as the sun in Heaven. His heart quickened, the warm blood rushed over his frame, his brain with the re-action brightened.

"You are not angry with the action, I can see. You are only displeased with me for being selfish. I have had some cause—the wild bird loves not to be forced into its cage for ever, without licence to fly, even for half an hour at a time. I was, however, treated so."

"Who forced you into a cage—did you not come here of your own free will? If not, I strangely mistook the person who introduced you."

"Yes, of my free desire—but now it has become my desire—my resolution and necessity to depart. And how can I? your father has ordered me to remain."

"To depart," she whispered, unconsciously, and a blank distress crossed her face, fleetly as a cloud over the sea, but too dark, too sudden, above all too natural, not to convey its full impression—no blank one that. Rodomant felt a longing to die that moment, while its celestial sweetness impregnated his heart. There might have been two reasons—or rather, either of two might have been the motive which had bidden her to banish him.

"My father ordered you to remain?" she said, recovering herself, as if she had heard his last words long after they were spoken—who knows not that simple and common consequence of a mood pre-occupied? "Why did you ask him? excuse me. Just now he is particularly nervous about any change in his household—he likes not new faces even, nor that old ones should leave him, lest it should be through disaffection that they depart. And as his birthday approaches—this birthday—he is anxious. Could you not bear to stay over that time? on his account, of course."

Strange plea—for her father! was it through pity—through prescience of an unknown doom—or rather, was it not that she desired not to lose

this audacious, singular, but one true-souled friend of her lonely life? Rodomant, keen to distinguish every shade of difference between her former and her present self, thought he could distinguish the regret she sought to veil. He might have been certain of it—but he would not allow himself time to realise. He believed this behaviour of his sprang from honourable pride; it did but rise from the insatiable purity of his passion, which would not have accepted the woman he adored, unless an overwhelming preference for him affected *her*—a love as like his own as woman's love could be.

"I could not stay over the jubilee—it is that I wish to avoid—I *would*, if possible, depart instantly. That was my intention in destroying the picture."

"Your intention in destroying the picture? I cannot understand — what connection has the picture with your departure? how could it assist you?"

"I thought it would make the prince so very angry, that he would send me away—that he would deem it below his state to punish me; indeed, how could he for a 'deed without a name?'"

The princess could not help smiling at this notion—child-like in its futility, as are such notions of very unworldly men—above all, men of genius; but she soon fell grave.

"I am indeed sorry, for I fear it will not help you at *all*. He would not care sufficiently, or, if he cared in the least, would attribute your nameless deed to the eccentricity that has so often served you. Why did you not apply to me? I could have written to Porphyro, and he would have contrived it; he could have recalled you to his person."

"I do not want to be recalled to his person; I should then be doubly bound. I want freedom, and I must have it, both for my heart and brain, or I shall die—or else go mad. Shall I act that I have gone mad, like David of old, princess?"

"Hush! hush!" she exclaimed, "pray, do not jest on the most hideous reality that may befall us—you or me, or anyone. Such mockery sounds like a challenge to that fearful chance." She shuddered, then fixed her eyes with penetrating majesty on Rodomant. She searched his face; her scrutiny contained no sentiment, but it seemed uneasy.

"Oh! I am not mad," said Rodomant; "and

it is nonsense, princess, to say that any person might *become* so; it is much more likely that the whole world is mad already, as some philosophers assert."

"Why did you not apply to me?" again she repeated.

"Because your highness ordered me away." Quite sane was the sarcastic tone. She blushed again, and cast her eyes towards the pavilion door. He stood out far from it, as though to leave the pathway clear for her departure, if she chose to go; yet she stayed. And now, there was no mystery in her expression, for the benevo lence of her heart brimmed up, and filled her eyes with dewy kindness. His welfare, if he left that place, what of it—and how, if he fared ill?

"What do you mean to do—pardon me, I do not enquire curiously—in case you go hence? Where would you go? Not that I would de-tain you—the aberrations of genius like yours are needful to it, it is ever restless; but I should not like to think you needed anything to fill up the measure of your daily comfort."

Had not Rodomant's mood been fiery, he must have melted into tears; as it was, he mocked

himself, and answered drily, "Thank God, I am no sensualist, nor was I bred in luxury, which I detest. I have already had too much, and besides, this climate enervates my ideas." Pure nonsense this, of course; she thought it bitter truth.

"I am quite sure I shall be able to find a way; take no forced steps," she said; "and if I may advise you, it will be to remain until the jubilee."

"That I am quite determined not to do. Why would you have me, princess?"

"I would not have you; it is for your advantage."

It was, she knew how lavishly all who ministered to it would be paid.

"But, though I resolve to go, I will be downright honourable, and leave a mass for the solemnity—or rather, send it here after I am gone; I should enjoy that. A grand mass—a solemn mass—it shall drop its 'peace' from heaven, and rend heaven with its 'hosanna.' Princess!" he exclaimed, after an instant's pause —the creative moment of the artist—during which she wavered between him and the door. At the fresh address she stood still, however; what more might he have to say? Far, indeed, was it from

her to expect he would allude to the picture again; she knew his moods too well; and in that one he had absolutely forgotten it.

"I have the greatest inclination to cast my 'peace' and my 'hosanna' to-night—I can only do it at the organ, that is, as I feel now. And I suppose it is too late."

"Not the least, you have often played later."

"That is true."

"If you wish it, I will give orders." She past him swiftly, thankful to escape for reflection—on her, indeed, she was resolved the responsibility of the deed he had done—"without a name"—should rest. And her whole heart was bent on keeping it a secret from her father, whom she feared for Rodomant, though she had avoided infecting him with her dread. He stood some moments in a waking dream, gazing into the void she had filled and left; then he sauntered slowly down the steps, and through the gardens towards the chapel; the semi-darkness with its heart of balm enfolding his dream in its own dream more deeply still.

All was ready in the chapel—Adelaída longed to divert him alike from the past and the future. With all her anxiety, and all her expectation,

this meeting him had touched her with inexplicable delight. A deep romance—deeper than that the still and passionate night ever breathed on her virgin spirit—thrilled her through and through with pleasure she could not name, and cared not to define. Never, in her life, had she positively indulged herself till this hour. But, before Rodomant reached the organ, whose lobby had a separate door and staircase on either side, she established herself in the darkest corner of the chapel, and there remained. This corner was immediately beneath the organ-niche, and farthest from the altar glare, and she fully intended to go out and return to the convent, before he had finished playing.

Souls wrapt in sense have few vagaries, or rather little inclination to indulge in them: Puck and Ariel alike pass them by on dancing step or delicate wing. They are never freak-ridden, though their gross whims gorge themselves in sensual secrecy. But a spiritual nature has for its highest and hardest temptation a disposition to outrage precedent—sometimes propriety. It is sure of itself—very likely—but it may endanger the machinery, moral or tangible, which it employs for agent. Again, who has not dreamed of

a dream? who has not remembered dimly what yet experience contradicts? who does not confound fact and imagination, to the damage of his reputation for truth?

Rodomant was in a lawless frame, a frame he had fixed on himself by his outrage on precedent; his subsequent excitement had enchanted him more wildly, and any number of imps and elves were ready to rush at his silent word, from the caverns of his haunted brain. Again, he felt he must spend his energy; his long idleness re-acted on a sudden in prodigious strength of intellect, it stirred like a giant refreshed. Long time ago he had dreamed—he had entirely forgotten it was a fact that he had been told—that, if the whole force of that organ were put out, the result would be tremendous. He had also *dreamed* (that is, been assured) that there was a law made to the purpose that the whole force of the organ was never to be employed. The law had never been broken, except once—but there his memories waxed dim and indistinct; he was at the mercy of his own volition, which resolved on recalling nothing that could dissuade him from his rash and forbidden longing. Unknown to himself, perhaps the failure of his design to

escape, of which the princess had assured him, drove him to the crisis of a more desperate endeavour. But, whether it was so or not, he was unconscious of it—so far innocent. He sat down, believing himself alone. Had he been aware of *her* presence, that would have beguiled him to safety, brought his wandering spirit to her heart. Had she retained courage to stand beside him, where her breath might mingle with his own, instead of placing herself out of sight—of hearing—out of *feeling* through the secret sense—his fatal sorrow had never fallen on him, for he had never indulged his fatal ecstasy.

"Softly, softly," mocked his whisper—to himself—and he touched alone the whispering reeds. Adelaída held her breath, and chid the beating of her heart, which seemed louder than the mellow pulse that throbbed in tune above. The symphony that followed fell like a mighty universal hush, through which the clarionet stop chanted, unuttered but articulate—"Give to us peace." Then the hush dissolved into a sea of sighs; "peace, peace!" they yearned, and the mild deep diapason muttered, "peace." She, the one listener, felt as it were her brain fill soft with tears, her eyes rained them, and her heart,

whose pulses had dropped as calm as dew, echoed the peaceful longing of the whole heart of humanity. A longing as peaceful in its expression, as the peace it longed for; the creation's travail seemed spent to the edge of joy.

Suddenly, as light swept chaos, this peaceful fancy was disrupted; her heart ravished from its rest, its calm torn from it. Down went the pedal which forced the whole first organ out at once, and, as if shouted by hosts of men and by myriad angels echoed, pealed the great Hosanna. The mighty rapture of the princess won her instantly from regret; no peace could be so glorious as that praise; and vast as was the volume of sound, the hands that invoked it had it so completely under control—voluntary control as yet—that it did not swamp her sense; her spirit floated on the wide stream with harmonious waves towards the measureless immensity of music at its source. To reach that centre without a circle—that perfection, which imperfection shadows not—that unborn, undying principle, which art tries humbly, falteringly, to illustrate—was never given to man on earth; and tries he to attain it, some fate, of which the chained Prometheus is at once the symbol and the warning, fastens to his soul for life.

The princess had bowed her head, and the soft and plenteous waters of her eyes had dried up like dew under the Midsummer sun; yet still she closed her eyes, for her brain felt fixed and alight with a nameless awe, such as passion lends presentiment.

Suddenly, in the words of Albericus, there burst overhead a noise like the roaring of "enormous artificial golden lions," that was the drum; less, in this instance, like smitten parchment, than the crackling roll of clouds that embrace in thunder. The noise amazed himself—yet Rodomant exulted in it, his audacity expanded with it, broke down the last barrier of reason. He added stop after stop—at the last and sixtieth stop, he unfettered the whole volume of the wind. That instant was a blast, not to speak irreverently, which sounded like the crack of doom. To her standing stricken underneath, it seemed to explode somewhere in the roof with a shock beyond all artillery—to tear up the ground under her feet, like the spasm of an earthquake—to rend the walls, like lightning's electric finger; and to shriek in her ringing brain the Advent of some implacable and dreadful judgment, but not the doom of all men—only one, which doom, alas! *she felt* might be also hers *in* his.

All men and women, within a mile, had heard the shock—or rather, felt it, and interpreted it in various ways. Only the prince himself, who was standing on the terrace, and had distinctly perceived the rich vibration of the strong, but calm, *Hosanna*, interpreted it rightly and directly, more than that his animal sagacity told him it was Rodomant, who, having amused himself, was now *indulging* the same individual. The capricious never pardon caprice easily, the capricious cruel, never. The prince said no word to any person, but set off by himself, and walked fast in the direction of the chapel. Several of his trained followers went after him, by force of habit; they had been taught to protect themselves in taking care of him.

To Adelaïda there was something more terrible in the succeeding silence, than in the shock of sound; it had ceased directly, died first into a discordant groan, which, rising to a scream, was still. She listened intensely—there was no fall of rattling fragments, the vibration had been insufficient, or not prolonged enough, to injure the window—that had been her first, chief fear. This removed, however, she felt doubly, desperately anxious. Why did he not come down, or speak,

or stir ? The men, employed to feed the monstrous machine with wind, had all rushed away together by the back ladder through which they entered, hence the cause of the shrieking groan and silence. He was then alone—for he knew not that she was there. Oh, that he would give some sign.

In a few minutes a sign was given, but not from him. The princess heard the grinding of the immense door near the altar, it was opened, steps entered hurriedly. She heard, next instant, her father's voice. Impregnated with icy ire, low with smothered hatred, distinct with the only purpose he ever entertained—punishment. In a moment she had formed her purpose, herself forgotten, save as its needful agent. She flew with feet that gave no echo, up the stair on her side of the lobby. Rodomant was sitting dead still, with his face in his hands—they looked rigid ; the veins in his forehead, as it showed above his hands, were swollen and stood out, but colourless as the keys that stretched beneath; his calmness chilled her blood. She thought him dead, and all within her, that lived, seemed to pass out of her in the *will*—nay, the power also, to restore him. She grasped his arm. He was not dead, then, for he

sighed—an awful sigh; it shook him like a light reed in the tempest, he shuddered from head to foot; he leaned towards her, as if about to faint, but never removed his close-locked hands from his eyes. Half-supporting him to an inevitable instant, she heard feet begin to mount the lobby-stairs *one* side. She dragged Rodomant from his seat—drew him down the stairs the other side (fortunately, next her, as she stood), and in half-a-minute they had passed through the door at the bottom, into the air and moonlight. Doubly needful now was haste—she whispered to him—he made no answer; still resistless as an infant, and heavy as a grown man under the weight of sickness. She could not have so supported him; her spirit cried out in anguish, and, as her cry left her lips, Rosuelo started from the entrance of the shadowy path, where, the first night she ever met Rodomant, they had wandered towards the chapel. Rosuelo had been beguiled by the music to loiter on his way home from the sacristy, where his evening duties had taken him; he had also seen the princess enter the chapel stealthily. And, when the great crash sounded, he had rushed to the door; but seeing her stand there silent, had again withdrawn.

Nor could he have said why he lingered in the tree-shadows; it was one of those happy chances, that befall the pure in their strong need.

"I cannot tell what has happened," said Adelaída, quite possessed of herself, or rather oblivious of herself in her anxiety; "but I am sure he is ill—and my father came in. You understand how dangerous it would be. I want to have him carried to the convent—it is the only place, you know.'

Rosuelo literally obeyed her; he lifted Rodomant, who was not more than two-thirds his height, though the two men were equally spare. Strange to say, it struck the princess unpleasantly —Rodomant neither struggled, nor remonstrated —she had been afraid of both. Rosuelo, at her entreaty, strode; she ran after him, and, when they approached the convent, outstripped him, and knocked loudly at the large door in the wall. The portress did not wait to peep (she conceived some person in sore distress had knocked) but she undrew the bolts directly. It was but barely time. As Rosuelo entered with his burden, the prince himself, with his gentlemen (all of whom had detected the princess with Rodomant, and their flight from the lobby),

might be seen, about a hundred feet distant, approaching. But the gate of the sanctuary closed—they could not enter *there*, and all turned back discomfited.

Rosuelo, at her request, carried Rodomant into the princess's room, rather larger than the rest of the convent cells, but furnished exactly like them. Placed on a chair, he still covered his eyes with his hands. The priest addressed him; he did not answer. A swifter terror than suspense struck through her; she believed his reason had fled—not that he was mad, but foolish.

"Send my own physician instantly,"—she ordered Rosuelo "and pray, return with him."

Rosuelo had never been *commanded* by her until that night; it was delicious after the long coldness—the lofty independence of himself she had maintained for years; he flew. Then Adelaída feared not to address—if needful, to soothe—her patient; she could not have made the slightest demonstration of interest in presence of another man. She laid first her gentle hands on his; hers bathed in warmth from exercise, his struck to them like death. She had only clasped his *arm* before; as hand met hand—or touch

thrilled touch, he shivered—his grasping fingers relaxed in their hold on each other, but closed on hers. As soft and nerveless as the pressure of a dying hand, love could not fear it, else she had withdrawn hers—for she loved. Alas! she knew it by that yearning after him in the darkness of the hour, that thrusting back of all idea of danger, that dread, intense desire to remain close to him in the mysterious woe she felt, before he uttered it. Yet she did not speak; if he had been actually dying, she could not have spoken *first* to save him. She waited long—she listened to his breathing, intermitted with tearless sobs. At last he gasped violently, a cold tear dropped on her hand, and he thrust it rudely from him.

"God has taken my punishment into his own hands; yet I defied not Him, only something made by man and man, himself." He spoke loudly, yet in halting words, with gaps of silence between each phrase; then stared wildly round him, and clapped both his hands upon his ears—withdrew them—closed his ears with his fingers, then dropped his hands, and cast on her a glance that implored—that demanded—the whole pity of her heart.

"Have mercy!" were his words; "I have lost my hearing, and it is for ever."

She burst into tears. "Weep! weep!" he cried, in the unmeasured tones of deafness. "Ah! I can bear it while you weep."

She feared, she knew not what, but his voice dried her tears. She gazed on him with recovered calm; she thrust inwards her intolerable sadness; she even smiled.

"Oh! that cannot be—or, if so, it will pass; you are only stunned. It was the noise, or rather, your being so near it."

"Things always come, if we say we cannot bear them. So used I to think of *this*. I do not hear my own voice—that is little; but listen, I cannot hear *yours*—what then?"

A question she could not answer. She came close to his ear, and sang into it her highest note of all—such a note as, in the hearing, seems to cleave the brain. She saw by the expression of his face in profile that he heard her not.

"Why did you send away that man? I would ask him to let me go with him until to-morrow—then I go; for here I cannot stay. Why was I brought here?"

She went to her writing-table in the corner,

and wrote, "You are here, because here only safe; these gates are closed against all but women and the afflicted. I sent the father for my own physician; he may, perhaps, relieve you instantly."

She brought the paper to Rodomant; he read it, tore it in two, and said sternly, "If any doctor comes near me, I will knock him down; I am going to my native place. I suppose I have escaped this way?" with strong and bitter emphasis. She turned to her table, for she could not face him in that sterner grief. "I will not stay here," he continued fiercely; "not, if you leave me. I saw in your eyes that you said to your heart, 'This afflicted shall remain in my room, rest in my bed, be caged, like my bird, in bonds sweeter than Heaven's liberty.'" In truth, a large and twilight-tinted bird, which had been roosted on a perch in one corner, had raised its head from under its wing at the unusual noise, and was staring at Rodomant with a bird's own glance—the brightest and softest, while the most cunning in the world. "That would be a crime," said he, continuing; "if I breathed where you had breathed, I should breathe *you*; if my head touched your pillow, your dreams

would blossom round it; and I have no right to gather those celestial flowers, nor to *feel* their fragrance; I will therefore go."

"You must stay till I have spoken with my father." She wrote these words—and not daring to wait for his reply, she left the chamber hastily, and locked the door. She went directly to the prince, and was with him but a few minutes—quitted him without the least remaining fear of his intercepting Rodomant's departure—though she still hoped to detain him.

Such hope she soon proved futile—for, when she returned with the physician, Rodomant deliberately knocked him down—so far consoling her with the conviction of his undiminished, if temporarily suspended, strength. The physician retired, hurt and angry. Then she passed two hours in written expostulations—defied by him; it required in fact some courage for a woman he had so addressed as before she left him this last time, to endeavour to detain him—even for his benefit. He was more than obstinate—he was stubborn—he treated his new trouble lightly, indeed, laughed it to scorn—"the surgeons of his own country would cure him in a month."

Adelaída slept not, nor went to bed that night

—though she left him alone for long. With incredible quickness, she made arrangements for his safe and speedy journey—in one of her own carriages, with her own servants—he might have had Rosuelo for a companion, but repudiated all companionship. In fact, if Adelaída had not made it the very greatest favour to *herself* that he should so depart, he would have gone by the common mode of transit, despite his infirmity and in contempt of it. Just after sunrise, she returned to him, and put her own tablets into his hand. "You can then write what you please, and so communicate with any one," she wrote on them, then added, "I have something else to give you." She left his side, and went into the corner. To its perch the bird now clung, a ball of feathers, its head pillowed under its wing. At her soft touch it woke, eyed her sleepily, but still knowingly, and flew on her wrist. So she carried it to the window, where Rodomant stood. And wrote—the bird meantime billing her lip, and uttering soft, long, low murmurs. Rodomant looked at it involuntarily — or rather, eyed jealously its bill—felt inclined to pluck it from her wrist. It was a peculiar, not brilliant-tinted bird—its colour neutral, but slightly changeful in

the light—its throat circled by a ring of opalescence. Its eyes vivid, like all birds' eyes—but expressive more than any other—it looked out of them, as though, instead of chirp or coo, it might at any moment speak.

"I give you my carrier-dove," she wrote with trembling hand, and downcast eyes. "I need not ask you to care for it—it will make you love it. Few have been its journeys yet, and I hope they will be few, for I do not wish it to bring me news, unless you are in trouble, and I can help you. My servants will bring me word of your arrival. In an extremity, great or slight, if I can be of use—only if I can be of use—send me by it a letter. Send it to no other person, or it will not return to me. Keep it continually with you, and do not let it fly, except hither. I shall leave the window open ever, so that, should I be absent, it may enter safely, and await me. But never send me letters by any other means, or messenger."

CHAPTER VII.

None who have treated of love as love first, and second, which is the *last*, as the first is its fleeting symbol, have exactly defined the metaphysical process by which the moral conscience suffers, in such instances, as much as the self-wounded spirit and suddenly — or slowly — dispassioned heart.

A pure nature can command all, save its instincts and its impulses—in such a nature certainly as pure. How many have erred, if not committed actual crime, in doing violence to those first signs of the Creator's presence in the creature. If a man or woman of uncultured rectitude and blood-implanted honour—qualities requiring no *rule* of action—happens to form a

wrong opinion, to adopt a judgment rashly, or show intolerance of another's prejudice, how readily such a person will, when *shown* the error, confess it—repair it by renunciation. But if such a one errs in love—discovers his or her first confidence to have been misplaced—their first instinct thrust back and confounded by the unworthiness of the nature towards which it sprang —they suffer as if from sin: the heart is oppressed with its emptiness—no burden is weightier than that void, and the intelligence shrinks from the face of the discovered truth, as though it were lurking falsehood.

So it was with Adelaída, her first love had been instinctively, generously bestowed. Her first love, some say such is the purest; it may be in the common sense, in which the infant is more innocent than the youth, or the dew more tender and imperceptible of exhalation than the warm wide-dropping shower that feeds the spring. But purer than any other sentiment born in her bosom, it could not be, for she possessed one of those characters which are unsusceptible of worldly taint, and as unearthly as a heaven-aspiring child of earth can be. Had Porphyro, when he first experienced the genuine passion

with which she inspired him, been direct and generous in expression, as in feeling, he might have possessed eternally as much of her as could to *him* for eternity have been united. For she would have had no "fear," her power of loving was too mighty. And the only dread, which would have deterred her, would not then have presented itself to her soul; the shadow of his innate and subtle worldliness, had not fallen on it then, as now it was destined to fall, and darken all her peace—she thought, for life; she feared, for immortality.

She was, if an imperfect being, a perfect woman. She had the feminine and exquisitely keen pride, without which passion in a woman is the characteristic the most self-harassing and man-perplexing of the whole circle of her attributes. So, in proportion to Porphyro's defection, in proportion to her painful perception of it, was the reaction of her pride. Yet, for that very reason, in the silence of her heart she carried on a vehement resistance of it—called it selfishness absorbing—arrogant hope—and envious fondness. Every cruel imputation she could devise on her own account she lavished on it, that saving, if not healing, quality. And severely as that very pride

she despised in herself was racked by the gradual discovery of Porphyro's neglect; it was a drearier grief to her that she felt *less* sorrow, if more annoyance, as his prolonged negligence was lengthened out, instead of profounder trouble, which should occupy too much for annoyance to find a place.

If, in her ideal imagination, she placed Porphyro too highly "on her bosom's throne," and worshipped, in the first instance, she was not only to be excused, but admired. A girl educated in a court the most delicate and the most depraved, in secret licensed out of the pale of law, custom, purity; and openly the most fastidious and coldly fine; with a master who had exhausted every device but of crime, and all appetites but cruelty. This girl rendered incorruptible by her own essence, as a star's light is intact by cloud or fog intercepting it from man—or as the heroes of celestial fable walked in the fiery furnace unconsumed. Porphyro was at once the noblest specimen of character, and the person the most passionate she had ever met—when first she saw him. He was, in fact, so noble and so passionate, that he was fit, as he was destined, to rule in happiness and safety millions for earth; to enhance

their worldly prosperity, and increase their portion; perhaps, to moralise the mass, a Catholic influence, if *true*, more precious than a *false* religion.

But this pale, delicate, and vast-souled woman was beyond his rule. Had he suspected this, he would have fascinated her straightway into his own arms, and *then*, had he proven the master of her life at first, and even for long, he would have ended in being her tyrant, through no fault of his, nor hers, simply because such a union would have been imperfect, unbalanced mentally, while between their spirits there would have been disunion.

Now she suffered in losing—not Porphyro's love, for she possessed that still, though she knew it not,—but in losing her own love for him. The "wounded spirit who can bear?" and hers was lacerated with her own inconstancy; her faith, self-ruptured, bled. She felt the pining for the lost impulse; the unresponsive instinct —which, what great soul does not experience, in first-love's lapse from life? Then, between that self-charged fault of hers, and the next necessity of her being, came a blank—a chasm in her thoughts that she would not overleap in fancy—a pause in passion she dared not fill; for beyond

lay an unseen, unknown prospect, which presented such alluring terrors and dread delights as Death, in the midst of its existence, shows the broken heart, which has given its love's angel to Heaven, as its idol to the grave—yet cannot die. Rodomant was gone; till he went, she knew not what his presence signified. He was as if dead to her; he would never return—she knew him well enough to know that. And if he had remained, how then? he would have been still dead to her—she would have so determined; and she determined on it still, so long as Porphyro remained *himself*, whether true to her or not. Had Rodomant let him alone, had he forced inwards his convictions, instead of enunciating them, he would have saved her pain—and weariness besides—but that was not his way. Still she held them as calumnies, because in the letter they were unfulfilled; she awaited their fulfilment, or their denial in the face of all society—this alone could set her free.

Time, the ruthless and the healing, meantime swept on with unheard wing and silent pulse. The prince, in default of Rodomant, had, instead of a single successor to him, called about him a select number of musicians on trial; not that he

meant to retain them, or any particular star of them—he had not made up his mind, nor did he contemplate the future beyond a given prospective point—the pageant of his jubilee. It is astonishing to witness the quantity of means, the immense pains, and the eager anticipations, bestowed on such pageants in honour of single individuals; it surprises more to reflect on the deficiency of entertainments in honour of those who lack daily food as well as feast-days—the poor, at least sacred as the person of royalty. And even the pageants, which only serve to gild the "refined gold" of state and eminent station, how inevitably they fail to beguile, to astonish, to gratify—with their spiritless symbols, their effete designs, their precedents sublime in shabbiness. How unlike the festival nowhere celebrated except in eternal story, to which the halt, blind, and dumb were gathered, and the wanderers in fields and hedges compelled—not coldly bidden.

However, the prince was full of his "white day" to come, as it would have become a child to be, or an heir on the edge of majority: It would seem as though the presentiments experienced by the good as to their own fate in life, or their

life's end, were celestial indications; for questionable characters are seldom so haunted—bad men never, except in fiction, or history, which is oftenest fiction baptised fact. However, this bad prince and worse man had no presentiment—he sneered openly at the old prophecy which might have suggested one;—yet a very critical casuist might have detected a dormant superstition in the arrangement, which postponed the procession to the cathedral, for the sacred phase of the proceedings, until one hour after noon, noon being the hour of his birth. The great organ had been removed to the cathedral, greatly to its own detriment, though no one cared to say so, not even the selected player, of whom there was no fear that he would be seized with Rodomant's *furor* to try its power; his hands were not strong enough. As for the grand mass, it was a conglomerate composition of ten individuals—that of Rodomant had vanished, like a vapour, with its own phantom outline.

The jubilee dawned in a brilliant sky, though it was one of the days of Belvidere farthest from the light of midsummer. Very early in the morning, a travelling-carriage stopped at the largest hotel in the city, whose environs formed

the palace-precinct. It was the hotel at which Romana halted till he found lodgings—lodgings he had lately left. And here be he dismissed, with the notice, that the very day before he left Belvidere, he received notes for an amount of money he could not recollect as due to him, but which he was obliged to keep, because he knew not to whom he should return it. By this time he was studying the scales of crocodiles in sultry Nile—blending simoom-splendours with mirage-mists upon his palette, and dreaming archaic pictures in the shadow of the Pyramids.

The travelling-carriage which stopped at the hotel, that festal morning, was evidently a hired one: its wheels were crazy, its varnish blistered, and the blinds, drawn closely down, were green, singed sere by sun-fire; the horses, also, were like grey, reeking skeletons. The postillions, clothed in rags, grumbled in an unknown tongue, which yet differed not in its inflexions from the language of Belvidere, as would have differed the German or the English. Their grumbling, however, ceased on their treatment by the late occupant of the carriage, now descended; it was, evidently, a liberal one, for they withdrew their brown hands, grinning with double ivory smiles,

such as only Italians flash against the light. The gentleman, who wore a cloak of semi-theatrical cut, and a hat very fashionably but irreverently slouched, was, however, not the *only* traveller, for he returned to the carriage, opened the door, and handed out a lady, to whom he whispered as she touched the topmost step, "Put up your veil now—there is no more to fear—we are at last *unknown!*" And instantly, with hasty hands and a drooping of the head as she did so, she snatched up her veil, and stood beside him. All the men round, the hostess, even the postboys, who had only seen her veiled, stood back in amazement at her beauty. Such faces were not seen in Belvidere—only the face of their future ruler was as fair;—but the princess, with her lily-paleness and still star-splendours, differed as much from *this* aspect as the star and the lily differ from the diamond and the rose.

Geraldine's bloom had returned to her renewed beauty with the excitement of the hour; her old medicine had befriended her besides. Geraldi knew that he had dragged her thither, that he had left her no will, that he had tortured in gaining her so far, yet also knew that yet he had not gained her. Therefore was it, that, for every few drops of opium

she had taken, he had drained draughts of brandy —not adulterated brandy—but above proof—pure.

Geraldi sent away the carriage, and desired the landlord, in guide-book phrase, to send him an interpreter. Such a one was sought, and after some pains found—a person filling one of the lowest offices, as cleanser of the stables. By a judicious sign or two, Geraldi discovered a certain masonry to exist between them—a masonry invented long since the erasure of Solomon's temple; in fact, the man was a republican, in voluntary, though necessary, exile, and Geraldi hailed his presence and fraternity as a fortunate omen. It soon shifted, however, to the dark side of fate, for Geraldine, who was watching the conference, and listening, though she could not hear, for they whispered, was terrified at his changing face, trembled at his stamping foot. His anger turned the current of her blood, though it was not with her he was wroth; her heart beat suddenly and strong, her eyes burned to weep, yet dared not; without his tenderness—when it dissolved from his face one moment—the soft mystery of hope turned to a cloud of shame, and she was walking in that shadow.

In the midst of the gloom, he came back to

her; he smiled, and the shadow vanished. She was no longer afraid, and she believed her shame had been a fancy, because she faced him instead; and certainly he owned no shame, nor fear; they could not reflect then from his face.

"Oh, Geraldine! that Rodomant has gone—has been gone more than four months."

This explains in a word what would be tedious enough in detail. Geraldi in persuading—we should say attracting, and we might say, forcing, Geraldine to fly with him from Italy, or rather from her grandmother's protection—for, of course, that was the fact,—had chosen Belvidere for a retreat, entirely because of Rodomant s residence there, of which he had heard, though not of his departure. Geraldi felt secure, that as Rodomant had prompted him to be an actor, and even assisted him in certain preliminary steps, he should be certain to find in the musician, now crowned with power as well as fame, a protector and a patron, at least a firm adviser; for Rodomant's power and position, as well as his resources, had been magnified by rumour; his fame could not be flattered nor exaggerated by report. It was scarcely strange, therefore, that Geraldi waxed wroth from the

freshness of the disappointment, to find himself farther from Rodomant than when in Italy, without an acquaintance in the land; for his actual means were scant—so scant he could clasp them in his hand—a handful of gold coin, minished by need of the journey to half its value of the day before, and minishing in prospect, hour by hour, to poverty. And Geraldine had brought no money—in fact, he would not have allowed her to take any, had she been rich at her own commands, and she was not yet of age. He was at least generous in his selfishness, he longed to support her, and would have laboured steadfastly to do so.

In justice to Geraldine also, never would his persuasions have prevailed—never had his protestations of passion tempted, nor his self-threatenings daunted her; but for the fact, which he made the most of in representing it to her, that he had been traced to secret meetings, arrested—and dismissed, because no charge could be fixed upon him—more than once. But lately, in consequence of increased daring on the part of his colleagues, which implicated him, his name had been published—placarded; a price was even set on him, among a dozen others. He had represented to her, and perhaps truly, that he was

lost if he remained in Italy, and she believed him, though she urged him not to fly, *alone*. In truth, she felt as though in solitude without him —the solitude in which, even with him, she sickened—she should go mad; nor could her heart endure to separate from its fond companion on his own account—he was certainly poor—he might be placed in circumstances of danger. Still, neither of these motives, though they influenced, would have led her astray of themselves —he chose her to accompany him, and she went. Her strength greatly repaired, though not restored entirely, and her recovered spirit—the courage of the sanguine-delicate—made such a flight physically possible, and he had arranged it the moment her health permitted.

Geraldi's disappointment merged not into despair this time — his hope was too strong within him, his lawless soul exulted too wildly in the present. Yet to Geraldine he was gentler than ever—he knew not why, but a strange ineffable pity took possession of his faculties, and his vehemence dissolved in it. A pity not only for her, but also himself—a sensation as though he were a third person, surveying their fates from the future, when they should be *past*—a feeling

more spiritual, yet more strong, than passion. All angels had not then forsaken him, or One above the angels. For that gentleness, that unwonted and inexplicable pity, saved her—delayed until too late for Time, her doom.

He took her into the hôtel—made her eat and rest; his strange subdued manner affected her violently, she lost all her self-possession, and wept, nor could he comfort her. This change in her, too—for she had acted gaiety and anticipation as much as he—alarmed him for her health; strong emotion was said to be dangerous for her. Observing that while he stood in the window—having left her side at her own request—she checked her tears; it struck him that, in order to pass tranquilly the next few hours, it was necessary she should be diverted. He recollected the festival—the interpreter had mentioned it to him, as occupying the whole population. The mass by this time was over, he had heard the time it was to begin, but he knew not what diversions or devices might be arranged to follow, and resolved to enquire. He left the room, looked for the landlord and his interpreter, who were lounging both at their own front door, and retreated with them to a corner inside the

entrance—there to question the one through the other. In reply, they advised him strongly, if he desired to partake in any sense of the evening's entertainment, to mingle with the masked crowd in the streets, as the prince intended to pass through the entire city by torchlight—scattering from his own hand largess in the form of sweetmeats touched with holy water, on his way to a ball in the palace, also in masquerade—the prince unmasked in both instances. As the special favourites of the court and nobility only had been invited to the ball, the streets would, added they, be more amusing than the view from any single window, as there would follow the torchlight a universal and enforced illumination. Geraldi enquired about costumes—safe as he deemed himself in his hold on Geraldine, he would not have risked taking her abroad, or going himself, undisguised; and he learnt speedily that the most common, and therefore little distinguishable, of the adopted characters were priests and monks for men—sisters (sacred and secular) of the order to which the princess belonged, for women. Geraldi dispatched his interpreter for two such dresses, and impatiently awaited his return—which was

extraordinarily quick, for the simple reason that the dresses, with which he was laden, were the very last to be procured in the city. Geraldi snatched them from his arms, and flew back to Geraldine. Nothing more opportune could have been suggested to her—she felt, and had felt ever since she entered a room, that she could not endure to stay indoors—she longed not only for the fresh air, but for that vague yet absolute sense of freedom it imparts, and its influence in suspending the action of the most excited thoughts for those who are peculiarly susceptible of it—as she.

The equipment took but few moments, and was accomplished merrily—whether the merriment was masked melancholy, or not; but it was certain that they each laboured to enjoy the hour, with that ineffable oppression which those who stifle conscience, willingly or forcibly, experience in its stead.

Geraldi's costume was of simple serge, passing well for heavy silk in moon and lamplight—with the legitimate cord, rosary with crucifix, and tonsured wig; Geraldine's the same material, fashioned like the evening robes of the princess herself, the difference being that the style

ecclesiastical was merged for the hour in a carnivalesque fancy, which had spangled the edges and the hem with tear-drops in blown-glass—emulous to imitate the Virgin's sorrow. Both masks were black.

They descended arm in arm, or rather Geraldine in the one arm of Geraldi, folded round her waist. Leaving the precinct of the hotel, which was brightly lighted, they soon came into the market place, and there found themselves repeated, as it were, and lost—among hundreds of dusky forms and masks, amidst what seemed a meeting of many friends in groups, and a buzz in an unknown tongue. Geraldine could not walk fast, and in walking leisurely she wearied soon; and Geraldi, having ascertained that the procession would pass round the cathedral, which in the centre of the town was not half a mile from the chief inn, determined to attain it as a point, and find standing place for Geraldine to rest. Easily enough they found the cathedral, whose marble mass swelled above all surrounding buildings, and having threaded one of the numberless small avenues to it, they came upon a great space round it comparatively clear. There were multitudes of persons waiting here, it is

true, but all drawn up in order, in close deep crowded lines, leaving broad moonlit paths between each row. And Geraldi noticed that this even crowd was denser in the vivid moonlight, and thinner where the shadow of the cathedral cut across the azure blaze upon the pavement, like a gulf of black blue darkness. He chose the shadow therefore; there she would be unmolested by the pressure, and in the shadow they stationed themselves, Geraldi supporting her with his whole strength still, and whispering ineffable sweetnesses, all the darling diminutives, of which his language has a treasury inexhaustible—fondness, if faulty, at least faithful. Geraldine never in her after-life could recall those words, nor their tone, nor even their meaning; nor did she try to answer them at the time—between that passing hour, which seemed suspended, and the future, there was a deep mystery, an abyss of inexplicable wonder, she cared not to contemplate, she could not fathom. She merely *existed* in the hour, was grateful for its suspension—beyond it hoped, expected, foresaw nothing.

In about a quarter of an hour a distant murmur took the silence, a distant trumpet-tone seemed, on shivering the air, to disturb the moonshine

also—then quiet dissolved altogether in confusion, nearer shouting, and the first far glimmer of the ruby torch points. Coming nearer, these looked like lines of burning stars, growing larger till they were larger than the moon, and a steam of fragrance rolled before them from the scented wood from which the brands were cleft. Geraldine watched the ruddy cressets with a wild and singular fascination—she fixed her eyes on them, she saw nothing else. Suddenly, and while they yet approached, grew larger; she felt herself swung upwards, and in another instant she stood within the shrine of a grey and glimmering saint in stone—the lowest decoration of the cathedral wall, consisting of such reiterated shrines or niches entirely round it. For Geraldi had perceived that the procession would pass close beside them, and fearing she should be rudely pushed, or even sustain the touch of any other hand than his upon her raiment, had placed her in this recess which he had suddenly discovered so near them, and yet raised above the ground. "Come up too," said Geraldine, the first words she had uttered, but he shook his head, he desired not that any other person should take his place beneath her. There was but just room for her to place her feet

in front of the cold effigy, and he bade her steady herself by putting her hand on his head.

The flashing din drew close—the eight horses walking, or rather taking long and measured leaps. Before them broke the guards from order, and made their steeds prance right and left, as though further to widen the way. They trampled on the edges of the shrinking crowd, and pressed them into closer compass. Geraldi, next the wall, could get no closer, but he felt niched by those about him in his few feet of standing room, as effectually as Geraldine in her shrine above him. Neither could have stirred now, had they wished. There was no room for *her* below—and though giddy with the tossing torch fire and the wavering multitude, she felt safe—still his arm was raised, and his hand clasped her dress inexorably.

The carriage passed them slowly—it was not ten feet off. In the glowing flicker could be discerned the white gleam of an unmasked face, and the whiter flash of a hand, on either side, thrust through the windows. As the sacred comfits fell, the crowd on both hands stooped to gather them—grappled for them—had they been grains of heaven-rained manna, they could not have been clutched so eagerly. Three persons

only bowed not either head or knee—Geraldine on her elevation, Geraldi underneath her, looking straight up in her face, and a third figure, taller than Geraldi a little, but dressed and masked like him. A figure, which though none around him had known or noticed the fact, had only that moment mingled with the crowd.

It was Rosuelo, who had crept in the shadow through a low door, looking like a block of stone itself, in the cathedral wall.

Exactly as the carriage passed—even at the instant that the prince's face was presented to *those three*, who had not stooped, in passing—Geraldi felt the elbow, which was farthest from Geraldine, pressed suddenly against his side. He turned his head from her, and looked over his shoulder. A man standing close beside him was in the act of raising his arm, and, as Geraldi concluded, had pressed his in doing so—he stood so near him. So Geraldi turned his head again, and looked up at Geraldine as before. Next moment they both heard, or rather felt, a whizzing shock; it did not, in the confused noise of the crowd and trample of the horses, sound loud, and yet it momentarily stunned. For in a moment it was over. There was a second of thrilling and

hideous silence, as if the whole multitude held breath at once. Then a wild and piercing—a universal yell. A confusion indescribable, a rush; Geraldi turned completely, still holding Geraldine by his hand and arm thrown back. The mass of the crowd had swerved from each line, and fallen into one—all men seemed mixed up in a writhing struggle, and the few women among them were lost in the midst. In the excitement of the moment, *which touched him not*, he was too deeply stirred within—Geraldi distinctly remembered the figure of the man which had gloomed beside him—that figure was no longer there. But on the ground, on the spot where he had stood, and close to Geraldi's feet, he saw an object lying, which he could not define in the shadow. Mechanically he stooped a moment, and picked it up. It was, an instant's glance assured him, a minute but dangerous fire-arm, and as mechanically as he had handled it for examination, he dropped it again in the shade. At that instant, he actually failed to associate it with the noise, the confusion, the sudden stoppage in the procession, for the carriage, a few feet past them, had ceased to move. He even thought that one of the horses had fallen, and Geraldine,

though raised above him, could see no more distinctly.

Suddenly, and soon, the collapse of the multitude reacted; it divided in wide masses, and straggled towards the cathedral, as though that shadow, or the wall which cast it, were a shelter from suspicion. Some persons had snatched torches from their bearers, and were flaming them in every face, dark with masks that hid suspected features. There thundered an order to unmask from the crowd just round the carriage. In a moment there glared a mass of white faces and terror-straining eyes on the moonlight, and in the shadow. Geraldi, in fear for Geraldine's fatigue, though he anticipated nothing worse for him nor her, was too full of it to heed—in fact, he only half-understood—the order to unmask. And he unmasked not—his and hers the only faces now darkened in the multitude. The unmasked soon detected this: bred in terror and superstition from the cradle, and tyrant-ridden into petty tyrants all—soon marked and fastened on both the masked faces, the one figure close against the wall, the other crouching in the niche above. On came the torch-carriers—some waving them above their heads; others thrusting them for-

wards into the masked faces; one or two, more cat-like and less ardent, held the flame steadily, as near the ground as possible. One of these saw the pistol lying almost at Geraldi's feet.

In a half-breath, it seemed as though a hundred hands grasped his limbs together—as if a hundred strangling fingers were eager at his throat. They were trying to unmask him, and the many failed. He was obliged to remove the hand which held on Geraldine, or he must have choked. He tore off his disguise; and Geraldine, brave as all women of passion in emergency, took hers off quietly, and leaping from her elevation, flung herself to him; and though his arms were bound already, and hers seized instantly, she pressed on close beside him. But her beauty sealed her innocence. Unhappily, *his* aspect struck conviction to the crowd, as well as to the officer who held him, of guilt. For Geraldi's heart, never melted in his life, this hour, this moment, broke—his pride gave way beneath it; and the agony that could not wash itself away in that agony—that storm of tears—the agony of having brought her into this danger, which might destroy her, she was so frail—passed with the cold, mad multitude for

fear. . . . Rosuelo, intrepid in assurance, lucid in intoxication, with all his wine-steeped faculties met in vivid focus; his frame wound up to a pitch higher than the fever-crisis in its strength; his arm steadied by a brazen nerve, directed by a will like that of madness, had shot the prince with intention pre-conceived—with motive his delirious brain deemed pure; and, like such fanatics usually—self-righteously impelled—he had succeeded. He had also pre-arranged, together with the crime, his own detection and arrest. How had these failed, when the crime succeeded? By force of nature, the nearest thing to God. With the crime, the conviction of it naked struck home, struck through joints and marrow to conscience, and wounded it to death. The false dress—the sacred investiture of imagination—dropped from the Fact of murder—not as regicide, but blood, for which blood must flow. And in an instant, like Cain from the face of God, Rosuelo turned and hid from man. In the confusion—rolling rather towards the point of murder than towards the agent of it—and helped by the shadow which had covered his entrance, he escaped under cover of the same, by the low door he knew so well—

that he had opened so often after his ministerings to those in extremity, and whom, his own faith wanting, he had failed to help.

But Rosuelo could not bear the noises brought through the crevices and cracks into the great empty space, and wandering there, like bodiless voices of souls without rest, imprisoned. Blood for blood! they shrieked; so whispered his soul, too. He must be alone to listen to that whisper. He knew every secret path, above and underground, which threaded the city; one of them led direct from the cathedral to the royal chapel, along which, on superb saints' days, the immense cathedral service for the holiest sacrament, was carried to the chapel; fear of the plate being ravished had caused the prince to establish this secret process of transmission.

He reached the chapel, all in shadow except where one broad moonray pierced a red gem of the altar window, and lay on the white step like blood just spilled. Rosuelo shuddered, and passed it hastily with closed eyes—groped for the door with his hands—the door which led to his own cell in the convent-shadow, and went out of it towards his only earthly home.

In the first morning gleam he sat in his stone

chamber; the morning freshness rolled the fire-cloud from his brain. And strangely enough, instead of experiencing the remorse which is said to strike naked to the soul, especially by daylight after darkness; the remorse which, in the night had possessed him all through the self-righteous assurance that his deed was just, now vanished like a spectre—took wings to itself like a day-scared noisome bird of night. Instead, a sense of triumph, winged with white glory like an angel, seemed to hover over his aching brain —the brain that seemed to ache with the very oppression of the glory . . . One, without faith in what all his life he had professed to believe, might well deceive himself in his life's crowning act. Was it indeed so? . . The moment for which he had only lived, which alone had kept him alive for years—the second of time for which he might be said to have laboured, so long had been the travail of his thought, with the design he had accomplished in a breath—this was done, the breath breathed, the soul returned by man to God, unrecalled by him. . . From the time Rosuelo had first worshipped a woman in the place of her Creator—not with that love which blends, even in its earthly form, with heavenly

love, but a love blind to God and heaven—a desire made sublime by passion, but not instinct with any soul; from that hour—now long past, yet ever present to him—he had bent his whole purpose, and trained his reason to the accomplishment of a deed which should exalt her to the character he knew she longed for most—deliverer of her degraded race from the rule which crushed it. From such pure fruition, should not crime spring pure? Then why all those long months—after long years of contemplation—did he find it needful to mithridate his mind through the only avenue of sense he left open to himself—to the end that crime's poison should, when at last tasted, taste to it like wholesome food?

But with the calm white day, not only did triumph spread dazzling wings over his head, to his strained and morbidly acute perception, but a dread shook the triumphant ecstacy, like a cold wind sweeping under the bright morning-clouds —often sweeping them away. This was, a fear lest the prince should not prove actually dead. For he did not know this—he had not stayed long enough to discover. He wondered, in the cold mood the fear had brought and left, why no

person had come to tell him—he had officiated from time to time, in turn, for the prince's private services. He would not have wondered, had he known the state of the city, since the blow was struck—how the spasm of surprise had passed into a saturnalia of awful joy, how the weight removed from the spirits of the populace, that for years had chained their hearts, had given place to the hideous license which is the reaction of too long a check, removed from inferior minds in the mass, without culture and without hope.

Noiselessly as though he feared to wake the dead, or call the living, Rosuelo left his cell. Cautious and soundless as he was, he was perfectly assured, not paler than usual, nor had he a drier tongue. Dead stillness, living freshness, everywhere. He walked under the convent wall, slowly—even with stately step. He meant thus to gain the chapel again, then to be found, as usual, at matin-time, and *then* to question what person soever he might first meet. Suspense was saved him, so far, and none could prize it more than he—even at that calm moment. Walking calmly along, and coming in due course to the convent-gates, he saw them

open—open to the convent garden. This was unusual. He would have entered, and gone across the garden to the inner doors, but found it needless; he could enquire at hand, for a group of sisters was gathered just inside the open gate. He was afraid to question directly about the prince, so merely asked, why they all waited there so early, and what event they were expecting?

"It is the poor woman, my father," said the eldest of the sisters, without looking in his face; indeed, they were none of them surprised to meet him, his apparition ever haunted their experience. "The princess sent word she was to be brought here, directly she heard she was so ill. She will come to see her, herself, before anyone is abroad," added the same sister, peering anxiously through the open gateway.

"I did not know there was a *woman* concerned," returned Rosuelo; not caring to assume ignorance, as he might be well supposed to have received intelligence of the night's event, if the nuns in their seclusion had heard of it.

"The wife, or sister—none knows which—of the assassin. There was believed to have been a conspiracy, at first, from her being so close to

him, but to him only could the blow be traced; and she was so young, and looked so innocent."

"Besides, she fell down in a fit in the guard-room," broke in another.

"Ah!" said Rosuelo; "and he—he has not escaped, of course?"

"He was beheaded at two o'clock; the prince ordered it, instantly, without form. He spoke so loud," said the sister, sinking her voice, "that everyone about him thought he would revive. They were his last words; the command was distinct, and no one dared to plead, because all thought he might recover."

"If the princess had only been in time!" exclaimed a third; "but she did not arrive till he was speechless. She sent word, on her own responsibility, for the execution to be delayed. It was too late. They say the princess fainted; I don't believe that, she never faints."

"Where was the princess last night, then?" enquired Rosuelo, with choking calmness; it was well for him that the awful fact bred *awe*, if loyal sorrow were impossible.

"That was the worst—yet it might have been as bad, had she been at the palace. She was in bed—here; she did not go out last night—some

say, she was not well. *I* think, she had one of her dreams the night before."

As a child, the princess had been accustomed to relate her dreams to the sisters in the convent, who were her favourite friends. Even in infancy, those winged ideas had ever a celestial direction, and a lucid distinctness that resembled forecast; as she grew older, she retained the faculty (rather spiritual than intellectual) of dreaming at her own will. But she never, after she attained full youthhood, confessed her dreams. In this instance, that previous night she had not dreamed at all in the usual sense, for she had not slept. Nor had she, in the common meaning, prayed. But she had passed the long hours in wrestling with the unseen—in mastering the mystery of the unknown; all humanity seemed borne upon her bosom, in her heart's deep bitterness; all hope for the world seemed to consist in the great love her own heart felt, the shadow and evidence of the Divine.

However, Rosuelo knew nothing of such dreams as hers, and, when he dreamed, it was of *her*, not of her spirit. He thought not at this instant of her at all, he was bitten by a rabid curiosity. "And who," asked he, "does the

wretch appear to be?—has his name been mentioned?"

"No one knows his name—he would not give it. He was an *Italian*, however—one of the new insurrectionists, they say. There were papers found on him, when he was searched,—in cipher, and the officer who translated certainly found some words he could decipher, and they were about a plot. That was good to happen, for it proves that, even if his punishment was premature, it was just."

It was a fact that Geraldi, in his last paroxysm of audacity to force Geraldine from her safety, had retained about his person some letters and minutes, both relating to a design on the government of his own lawful sovereign, whose name was not mentioned in either. Thus the snare had entangled his own feet. But, neither assassination, nor personal injury, was intended in the first instance.

Rosuelo, still burning with the desire for knowledge, which he knew not in what terms to confess, nor how to gratify further at that moment, stood among the women, as if preparing with them to assist their sacred charge. The women whispered together—not about him, though. Soon a carriage was seen in the dis-

tance, it passed in and out of the tree-shadows slowly, but when it came near enough for the sun to reveal its panels, it was discovered to be the princess's own. Rosuelo was obliged now to await its entrance, for his departure would have been too remarkable to attempt. The wheels rolled through the gateway, the princess was in the carriage—Rosuelo saw no other occupant as yet. He felt that her eyes fell upon him, and yet more self-consciously *felt*, rather than saw, that she alighted then and there. Her glance quitted him an instant, during which Geraldine was lifted from the front seat tenderly, the princess assisting; next moment she looked at *him* again, and turned her eyes from him, slowly, gradually downward, till they rested painfully—it seemed reproachfully—on Geraldine's face. Whom reproached she?—not strange that she felt pain, and showed it,—but why reproach?

"She is dead," said one sister, solemnly. "Close her eyes," exclaimed another, and trembling, put out a gentle hand to touch the lids of the blue eyes, glazed upwards, unshrinking from the sun that poured upon them. Rosuelo turned sick, and felt as though he turned pale from head to foot, faint anguish thrilled in every vein. Had

he remained an instant, he must have fallen, and he knew this. In the black mist that swept before his eyes he saw nothing, even lost sight of her he loved, and that dead face he feared. He groped for the cold stones of the piled up gateway, passed out, and crept along by fingering the cold stones of the wall.

By the time he reached his cell, he again saw distinctly—realised with vivid sense beyond distinctness. He had once entertained a design for poisoning the prince, when called to exhibit the host in his presence, on one of the rare occasions which happened about a year apart from each other. But infidel as he was, he had always trembled to pollute the wafer, *because* the prince believed in its efficacy. It was easy to him to poison either element on his own behalf, for he believed in neither.

He took a little phial from a recess, and went out quietly, locked his cell, and entered the chapel, or rather first the sacristy. Re-issuing from this sacred and secret chamber—open to men of his profession, he stood at the altar foot, with something in his hand. A golden vase, deep crusted and edged with gems, that flashed like rainbow lightnings in the sunshine, poured in-

sufferably, blindingly glorious, through the altar window, unruptured by the shock of music, which the echoes had long since forgotten.

Never could Rosuelo explain to his dying hour, long delayed, why he did not drain the goblet in the secret chamber of the sacristy. Probably it was a simple reason—nature's daily, hourly miracles are ever simple—the instinct of self-preservation roused by imminent, though self-presented, danger. A natural instinct—whereas that of self-destruction is an unnatural one, requiring stimulants or stultifying opiates, in order to consummate its cravings.

As Rosuelo stood on the altar base, still dallying with the death he had invoked, an ineffable sense of worship of the adorable, if nameless—struck him. It was a new sense, belonging not to the order of senses, and filled him with delicious fear. It could not be the contemplation of those heaped treasures of the world, cast recklessly on the shrine of that unknown God, the church. He had seen them a thousand times, and long since wearied of the spectacle. But as though, through the myriad jewel-blaze, he detected the source of light, he leaned towards it, strained his eyes towards it, but did not kneel. He aspired

too yearningly to abase his body. His brain quivered with a pulsation that resembled the throbbing of white flame in fire, nearest the central heat.

As so he stood, all eye, a voice clove the dazzling calm. The forgotten senses leaped to order in response; the hand, holding the sacred vase, filled from flagon by the church held sacred, shook, but still grasped it. When should it be emptied—if not now?

Curious were Adelaïda's first words, curiously at variance, too, with her white cheeks, swollen eyes, and womanhood trembling in each fibre. "Give me that wine to taste." No longer "father," he noticed that, even in his extremity. No longer "my daughter," then.

"It is not for such as thou," he said. But his voice was steady, the question on her part had steadied him.

"Give it me, this moment," she repeated.

"The sacred vessel!" he exclaimed.

"Was it ever sacred to you?"

She stretched her hand towards it—already she touched the stem. With an iron force and a gesture that contradicted his calm tone, he tore it from her touch—upturned it. In a moment,

the wine lay like dashed rubies on the marble step. Then for once he flung himself on his knees—not before God, but her.

"I thought you would not let me taste it," she said. "You do not wish to kill me. Now rise, there is my hand." Very sternly the last few words were uttered. But he would not touch it, he staggered to his feet, and leaned with his whole weight of weakness now on the railing of the altar. She looked clear at him, her pale face darkened with shame, with sorrow, with passionless regret.

"I saw your face, when I was in the carriage. That told me. I followed you. Understand—*you told me yourself*—I should never have dreamed, nor guessed it . . . So you would have died, and allowed them to write murder on a stainless grave!"

His chest heaved with the great pulse of his heart—swollen, as though all his life had rushed into it—between its beatings he could only mutter, "Blood for blood, the old law—nature's; men demand it too."

"There has been blood for blood," she answered awfully, "and better blood than yours; it was innocent, and for a sacrifice to the guilty shall

suffice. You forget, that it is *I* now only, who have the right to let you die—or to command you to live."

This was true—he knew it. Oh! that she would "let him die."

"You cannot—you ought not—to forgive," he groaned, falling on his knees again. "Oh, give me death!"

"I bid you live, because you wish to die. I charge you, before God, to live. I command you, unless you would destroy me; I can bear no more *of death*."

She wept an instant. Her sorrow triumphed—his manhood melted into pity at her tears, and in her weakness his strength dissolved. Her presence was no longer temptation, either to passion or to death.

"Swear to me," she faltered, "swear that you will depart and *live*. Make not my burden heavier. I have already much to bear."

"No oath," he said, "for I cannot take it, nor you accept it from me."

"Your promise."

"I will not promise. But I go. And because you command it, I will try to live. I will try not to long for death."

"I believe you—you will not disappoint me. For you dare not die; you have hated too strongly: you must learn to love. To live for others—you have injured many. Give *yourself*, instead of substance. Live that, after death, in its own time, we may meet as friends for ever."

She moved slowly towards the door—she had done her utmost—her entire strength was spent. She feared—more than she hoped; she had little faith in the efficacy of her endeavour. Yet it was successful. Shunning the death he yearned for, as he had been taught by murder to shun her love—he went forth, and lived. His life was "the body of death"—one long exhaustion of the founts of loveless charity, drained ever, never empty. He found no comfort—no peace—no self-approval. In thick dangers that were death to thousands, he stood safe, and lived; diseases in passing mocked his health, that, unfed by care or wholesome influences, never failed him. Ingratitude met him for devotion, crime-laden conscience delivered over to him its burden, the cup of cold water he gave was dashed in his face—his sympathy repudiated with contempt. In lowly paths, by ways none traced, he learned histories unwritten, he taught lessons that were

never learned. And last of all, without reward, without hope—having forgotten love in loving others—he died, expecting rest, only rest, and only desiring rest. And woke up to receive—a martyr's crown; a fame celestial that rung through Heaven. She had left him to the judgment of God. . . . .

Adelaída returned to Geraldine, still lying, where she had first been placed—in the princess's own bed. Doctors, called in, had quarreled over the name of the attack, and all but fought over the proper remedies. Trance, catalepsy, hysteria, idiocy from fright, incipient insanity, jangled in the catalogue; cordials, cardiacs, stimulants, opiates, were exhausted in their appellatives professional. One or two were tried, successively—but Adelaída would permit no more to be administered; she perceived a vague distress creep over the death-calm face, an expression which only one woman could interpret in another, when *speechless*. It betrayed that power to suffer lasted—therefore, there was life; also power to discriminate—therefore, reason. So she sent all the doctors away, nor would allow another nurse to enter—fearful to thwart or trouble the magnetic current which encompasses vitality.

Not a moment's sleep did she suffer herself to take, lest her patient should, suddenly restored, require nutriment, and actually sink for want of it instantly conveyed. She yet found means to superintend every necessary duty, by communicating with messengers at the door. She would permit no person but herself to be applied to for public necessities, nor special exigencies of Death's occasion. Her father lay in state; all prisoners were released (for the moment her own pensioners); and the sick carried to hospitals for the time appointed, tended by her own sisterhood, while she was tending Geraldine.

The assertion has been ventured, that happiness will restore the dying. If love makes happiness, Adelaída might have raised the dead —so loving was she. It is possible that mere care and pity would not have brought back Geraldine from the edge of the grave she was so near; but as her nurse watched her, she LOVED her, and willed her restoration, with the single heart of love. Deeply as a woman so pure and passionate could, she felt for the helpless creature lying in her own bed. She had taken pains to ascertain, that all through the reckless injustice of a secret tribunal, and the

barbaric cruelty of a secret execution; the very soldiers who took part in the latter, assisted by the guards concerned in the first, had combined, without orders, to tear Geraldine from the scene, long before its completion. Therefore, knowing that she was actually unaware of the end, Adelaída conceived it could only have been wedded-love, or promised wife-hood that had caused in its agony of parting a lapse of consciousness—a pause in being, that resembled an enchanted death.

It was a hard task for a woman like Adelaída to sit by her, and await her re-living response—the awakening of reason which would be the signal for the real death of bereavement to enter the soul. Not only to have to witness the unavailing sorrow, but to break up its fountains by the shock of revelation—which it was hers alone to make. She had been sorely nerve-shaken herself, and heart-wrung by pride—by neglect. For Porphyro, actually busy as she had never beheld, and could not fancy him—Porphyro, whose whole intelligence was bent on grasping his own sanity tight in the crisis of success, such as never dizzied man before—had only sent an official message of politic sympathy with the

new regnant and the kingdom in one. Not a word to her—for her alone! And to recall her loss to her, was to mock her with an orphanage that had lasted from her birth—no *new* loneliness, except what he had himself created for her.

Late in the afternoon of the fifth day of her unconsciousness, Geraldine suddenly and softly woke—like an infant, to whom the shockof waking is so gentle, while to the adult it always seems a violent recall. Adelaída was sitting at the window —that window always open, though now a screen was drawn from the ceiling to the floor, between it and the bed. Geraldine, turning her head on her pillow, saw, as she supposed, a charitable nurse. "How long have I been asleep?" she asked. Adelaída's heart answered long before her lips; she forgot all her own sorrow in the joy of that awakening, which she had watched for with the tenderness which so tenderly endears its object.

"Many hours," she answered, going quietly to the bedside. Adelaída spoke in Italian—all accomplishments were hers. Geraldine for an instant fancied herself back in Italy, and forgot (she had remembered in her trance) for a moment

what had happened. She gazed in the sweet face bending over her, as though to recall it as belonging to one of her ancient friends; but her eyes wavered in their weakness, and closing them, she remembered all—on the darkness of her brain, the picture of the late past seemed drawn distinctly, only far less vividly than when she slept.

"Is he buried?" were her first words. And natural as they were to herself, knowing what she knew, they made her companion shiver. She had not shared, and could not sympathise with, the terrors of that trance. She could not even *guess* them. Amazement checked and dried the springing tears. How! could the sleeper have dwelt with the unseen?—whither had gone forth her soul, and how had it stealthily returned?

But Adelaída knew too much about illness to express surprise. "He is not buried," she answered steadily and softly. "I thought you would like to see him, and I had him embalmed."

"I thank you," said Geraldine as quietly. Something of the somnambulistic suspension clung to her senses still, though her soul had released her frame—the cold and passionless serenity, in which all impressions, great and small, sink lightly, like bodies in a vacuum.

"There is a comfort," she continued, looking out now as into space, with a vague, yet solemn, vision. "He did not suffer; I who saw it suffered. Sensation ceases before life. The sword was sharp, too; the man sharpened it on purpose. His back was turned to Geraldi; but I saw a tear dropon the steel, and dull it. He knew Geraldi was innocent. I saw his thoughts, and I wondered that he struck; but, though I was there, I could not speak."

Adelaída again shuddered. Whence came this awful familiarity with what flesh had not experienced—which eye had not seen, nor ear heard? For it was *impossible* Geraldine could have been sensibly conscious. She had been wrenched from him, before the sentence was pronounced—had fallen straightway into that state which had suspended, at least obviously, her volition.

Still more fixed became her gaze—not dreamy, but as if searching the light for some mystery it enfolded, as unseen as in the darkness.

"He is now at rest, and some time soon, he will be happy. I wish I could *now* see his thoughts, as I did *then!* But he—will—be—happy—when —I—am—back—again—with"— Here her voice dropped a name in silence; the princess's

eager ear lost the sound, though her eye saw the motion of the lips. Strange phenomenon! Geraldine felt, even in that awakened *sense*, that she had no right to reveal Geraldi's secret, sheltered by the grave.

"How gently he went! How glorious he looked! I saw in his soul that he was glad to die. . . . . He wanted to write word to Diamid"— Again she paused. "They would not give him pen and ink. I think they thought he wanted to defend himself, and they knew it was of no use. . . . . He scratched his wrist, and showed it them—made signs he only wanted a pen, by writing on the air."

It was all true. And truly had she read his thoughts,—his soul. He had longed to write to Albany an assurance, signed by a hand with its latest motion, of Geraldine's perfect innocence —his own intended guilt, from which, let it be in justice to him said, he had actually quailed, when it became possible of accomplishment. His agony had not been the fear of dying, for every drop of blood in his veins was valiant; but that he had not been able to *write* such an assurance;—he feared, no man would believe a woman's simple word—he knew not the husband from whom he

had separated Geraldine, yet to whom, in his last hour, he yearned but to restore her, pure.

Adelaída, who had intended to make Geraldine take some nourishment the moment she showed consciousness, had literally been spelled from her duty; she could but stand there, and hear to the end, the mysterious story. It was over—all told, and, with the will for action, the power ceased. Now Geraldine really fainted from want of food—the strange hunger without appetite, which all who have passed through great sorrows —which are also great terrors—know so well. *From this*, it was easy to arouse her—it was merely a physical symptom, and restoratives, which had failed utterly in he first instance, availed directly now. And when restored, the nurse's chief care was to prevent the patient from eating too fast and eagerly. "Make me strong, oh let me be—strong!" was now her only cry. And though farthest from strong, yet after an hour's natural sleep, she woke, and demanded materials for writing. The princess, still sitting in the window, wondered who upon earth she could have to write to—she wrote so much. The sheets covered the bed all round her;—hours afterwards, she wrote till, and there were sheets on the floor;—hours

afterwards, she wanted more paper, she had filled a quire. This, Geraldine's last composition—for she never again had desire to write, nor need to write to him—was a letter to her husband.

CHAPTER VIII.

SINGULARLY as the princess's reign began, it would have excited more general astonishment if it had not been over a kingdom so limited in tract and a people so inert, she was suddenly called to rule. As it had been ushered in with no more state than that—always solemn, in this case awful—the right of royal sepulture demanded, so no universal acclaim, no addresses of adulation, nor waste of finances, were permitted by her to succeed it. For the present, as at first, she wore her wonted robes of sorrow, which required no weed additional to make them mourning; and remained in strict retirement. Except for the orders which none could countermand, nor, so early in a reign, the most disaffected dishonour—the orders for the personal freedom and temporary

amelioration of the most suffering and degraded of her subjects,—she contradicted the precedent, and altered not a phase of government as yet. As for the antique charmed circle of ministers and courtiers, they marvelled at this licence of repose, even more than did the people. And the latter, morally unprepared for the change wrought for them by feminine benevolence, received it rather as a shock, than accepted it as a boon. Then, there was nothing to feed wonder for the wealthy and ambitious, nor curiosity for the needy and ignorant; the surface of events lay calm without a tide—a calm which, if it were suffered to remain unstirred, unbroken, for very long, might reasonably be anticipated to quicken into those forms of monstrous evil, inevitably bred by idleness — whether among courtiers, or amidst criminals.

Adelaïda knew this well; she had reasons great and deep, and as philosophical as ever swayed a woman, for permitting such a state of things to last awhile. She desired her subjects to experience the need of governance, to ascertain their absolute inaptness to rule themselves; she willed to excite in them a universal yearning for a safe, strong guidance to a place among

nations, higher than their country had held before. Exhausted by tyranny, she would have them rest without action, and without hope or fear, in order that they might recover some portion of that mettle, which is, to a multitude, what the "tone" of the physician is to the human constitution. Had she chosen, she could easily have won for herself a fictitious loyalty, a passion for homage, such as one so fair may ever expect from the majority, and which, if she be also so wise, she may even keep warm for herself, in a thousand hearts, for years. But it was not for years, she longed that her country should benefit through her influence, it was for ages—to the end of time. And being so wise, she trusted neither to her woman's beauty, nor her own unworldly wisdom.

During Geraldine's sick trance, she had attended solely to her; on her recovery—rapid as her lapse from strength—her nurse left her often, providing her with every book and means of recreation appertaining to herself. Then the princess shut herself up in her rooms in the palace, and wrote many letters, all with the same superscription—all on the same subject, for the simple reason that she received no answer to the first—nor second—nor any, else she had only

written *one*. They were sent by special couriers, who, at least, had sworn to deliver them, and swore, on their return, that they had been delivered into the proper recipient's own hands.

So, no answer came; at last, after despatching seven letters, all couched in the same terms, almost the identical words, the princess gave in, or her patience gave way. Still she stayed sedulously in her seclusion, and therein assumed an air, which was certainly pure from all passion save that of pride, but which breathed from brow, from gesture, and from eye,—for the first time, a pride excelling love; for it was pride outraged, triumphing in humanity over love destroyed; and Heaven, in that human crisis, cannot help its children. Adelaída, in her pride, bemoaned herself over its very absolute and necessary indulgence; for she had reflected, had meditated, had speculated—all in vain—to understand why Porphyro had thus insulted, through her royalty, her womanhood. It was Porphyro whom, in all those letters, she had addressed; and Porphyro, as man, as gentleman, as soldier, as director—albeit she no longer loved him—was, indeed, difficult to realise in *insult* towards woman, frequent as had been his lapses—un

known to her—from the severity of virtue, and he had actually never failed in kindness to any human being.

There is limit to all anguish, unless meant to kill, and simple wound to neither love nor pride does *that.* The limit crossed her existence suddenly, and quickly, as a line across the daylight drawn, and made an electric pathway. In fact, by electricity she was told—through silent rushing whisper it made her ware—that Porphyro, on a certain day—breathed, too, in silent mention its near date—would visit her. And that was all—no fate a woman cherishes, to be left in ignorance of a man's will towards her, even in so slight a matter as a visit; for Adelaída was woman enough to be sensitive on that point; she would, lovelessly expecting him, right royally receive him, in revenge—not of him, but of herself—that she could not with fairer and tenderer honour greet him, and because all yearning for his coming ceased.

The limit of the hundred years sleep made scarcely livelier noise through the enchanted palace. She sent for the grand chamberlain, she called the ministers; the decorator of apartments was alone with her for hours in her room. Her

commands, which instituted arrangements the most profuse, the most superb, and peremptorily royal, were issued with haughtiness, with resolution, with courage; affecting her servants unresistingly. Beyond Cleopatra's superfeminine fascination, or Catherine's brazen sex-defiance, or the iron tact of Austria's typical empress, seemed the power of this pale girl's will, for the first time breathed in words. None questioned the undeniable mystery of her mood—all hastened to achieve its large designs—whose result, like their "final cause," must be postponed a page or two.

Time brought the morning of Porphyro's visit. The precise hour of that event had been left out of mention, and Adelaída—whether it should prove to be early or late—did not choose to appear, as she felt, impatient. She therefore lingered long in her sleeping chamber, now left clear to her, for Geraldine had been, in the safest hands of all the world for her, removed away. Adelaída wore her conventual dress—would she retain that too? However that was to be, she now leaned listlessly to the sight, on the sill of the open window. Thoughts bright and dark, like wings of birds crossing, now in sunshine, now in shadow, the face of day, swept softly the empyrean

of her spirit. That empyrean seemed an immensity of solitude. For the thoughts were not anticipations—they rushed from the chasm of the past, hence their shifting light and darkness—hence their incapability to companion or console the present, or whisper promise for the future. In fact, her mind had aspired to that rarest frame, in which flesh must perish prematurely, unless drawn forcibly earthwards by the warm breath of human sympathy, or the magnetism of long-suffering love; too rare an atmosphere to breathe in—too high above mankind, and yet too far—how far below the lowest heaven! The dead love's ghost, invisible, haunted that solitude with its own empty, unseen, voiceless presence, making itself felt by creating, within solitude, a solitude. And the new and living love seemed as far as Heaven, as unknown as angel's faces, as *impossible* to realise, through sense, as God Himself.

These rare moods beguiled her. Certain that all her preparations were complete, she heeded not the moments, as they melted into minutes, nor the minutes, as they slowly lengthened into hours. In reality, she passed four hours as it were thus suspended between earth and heaven.

In the glowing, burning afternoon, the still hot hour when the sun drove all creatures to the shade, and the shadow brought them sleep—the time when the very flowers seemed to dream, and the fruit looked charmed like the golden bunches of Hesperian groves, when the lucid sky lay face to face in light with the lustre-dissolved depths of the lovely bay; then a great sound of a silver clarion gushed through space, making itself a way irresistible as a lightning or a wind. Adelaída alone, and vividly awake, heard it fearfully:—it seemed to transfix her brain, its echoes thrilled and rang there like the pulses of a sudden wound. And before the old grey convent walls had trembled out their last vibration, a second salute pealed silvery—this time as breathing soft as the shell of Orpheus heard in the depths of the darkest forest. Not withering into silence this—but prolonged, and passing into a superb and ardent strain, the peculiar double-cadence at once mellow and ear-piercing, of metallic instruments in concert, unqualified by wood or string.

A bass of drums, rolling on into the city's silence, seemed to rock the martial measure on its heavy monotone, but not the martial measure

only, another sound, deeper and, though as regular, intermitted, which the melody was not; this other sound seemed to echo from underground the dull throb of the stricken parchment on the air. And it seemed to the imagination of Adelaída, fired suddenly, like the tread of a great army, trampling forwards to destruction. For an instant the listener quailed, she was woman after all, and the blood seemed to cease its coursing, and stand in her veins ice-still. The next it rushed back to her heart with the courage of a thousand virgins, in their purity secure. She waited not a moment after *that*—the time was come for energy, if not action: she hastened into the courtyard, where her carriage had the whole morning waited, and in ten minutes more was safe within the palace. Now its preparations seemed doubly necessary, as guarded by hundreds of soldiers and men, they would suffice for welcome—for defiance—or for defence.

But the purest-minded imaginative woman may mistake a man, especially a man she has once loved too carefully, and now too carefully dislikes. The silvery blasting challenge had been a peaceful one, if triumphant as pacific; and even Adelaída rallied, and half-disdained herself,

when she heard the music and the march draw nearer; knowing then that both had entered at her gates, and been received there by her own especial servants, appointed by herself to watch all day for Porphyro, whose arrival all had expected, without being aware of the special features which should invest it.

She placed herself at the central window of the seven which spread wide their crystal sheets in front of the largest reception room. She had not changed her dress, and its sombre quietude contrasted most singularly with the dazzling array and royal superfluity around her, but not so remarkably as with the picture which, few seconds after she had taken there her station, dropped as it were by magic before her eyes.

Across the lawn, whose emerald enamel sloped half a mile towards the bay, there swept suddenly a glittering crowd of guards, not hers, and drew up statue-still:—a band, the most superbly mounted, and walking their horses to the tune—now chastened audibly, while the drums were silent, followed, and arranged themselves at an angle with the guards. The uplifted instruments, the arms and harness, gave under the sun a glory like molten metal, no eye could rest on it for

long. Lastly, across the double sheen, outshining it for whiteness and silvery blaze, was slowly drawn an equipage, which, with its eight steeds, whose heads were held by sixteen men, closed the angle, and was nearest the frontage of the palace.

The moment she caught a glimpse of this, and even before it rested, the princess left the window, crossed the room, and passed down the broad stair to the broader terrace. She knew her place as a woman, and therefore advanced not further. Indeed there would not have been time. The door of the carriage was opened. Porphyro stepped out immediately, and hastily crossed the space still stretched between them. And in that brief interval she had recovered her full consciousness and control. An almost touching impression affected her just then, of the indifference to circumstance of Porphyro's personality. Looking at once slighter and stronger, plainer and more interesting than ever, dressed simply in black, without badge or ornament to vulgarise, he seemed more than ever distinct both from men and their inventions; and as to the pomp surrounding him, he was actually as independent of it, even in his air unchanged—as a woman

perfectly beautiful is of her elegant drawing room, or her graceful toilet. He was *himself*—why had he sought assimilation with the many through a medium they despised? So questioned Adelaída her own taste; not yet her heart responded, for she had not seen *all*, and she yet guessed nothing.

Porphyro trod the step of the terrace beneath her, and without rising to the exact level, sank on the marble at her feet. As of old accustomed, she had simply extended her hand. For the first time, instead of touching it with his, he kissed it. Strange memory of another kiss—the only pressure of human lip she ever felt—returned to her: not painful as this new salute, which in old days (so short a while ago) she had longed for with all the jealous innocence of passion. Now she drew her hand back quickly, she could not endure the pressure, if prolonged—as it seemed it might be. And Porphyro lifted his head in amazement—quite sincere. Their eyes met; for the first time his spirit shrank from its full confidence;—never had her eyes faced him so serenely or so long, or with so little trouble in their gentle glory. And—stranger still—she addressed him at once in accents intimate and haughty—too haughty for a woman in the sweet suspense of hope, too in-

timate for a woman who loves profoundly, with as much modesty as passion.

"I rejoice to see you, for your presence assures me of your consent to my arrangement. Now excuse me but for an instant;—my curiosity is strongly excited. I expected you as *usual*,—And I see—"

What saw she that filled her glance with shadeless indignation, and scarcely masked contempt? Used to vain pomp from her cradle, how surprised or mystified her *this*? How stung it her suspicion? Alas! for *him* this time;—she saw—she comprehended—and she sickened at the mystery fulfilled. Yet, it had been distinctly forecast for her, had she but then regarded it—how long ago! Truthful had been the prophet, who was no longer there, to behold the strict accomplishment of his prevision.

Accomplished not in those superb rags of purple, nor those sublime drugs of metal, nor in the plumes snow-tufted of the milk white steeds; nor in the dazzling panel, on whose surface gleamed the iris, with golden central cipher of a single letter; nor in the silk-soft lining of the chariot, iris and star-besprent; nor in the star and iris, reiterated on every breast, save that of

him whose double sign they were. These were conceits,—and if they sprang from human vanity, how much nobler he who shall reveal, than he who hides, his special weakness. But, stay;—the frame of the carriage, raised like a canopy of silver frostwork, supported an imperial crown.

"Grant me a short interview alone; I will lead the way," was her first remark. Its assurance, rather of tone than of phrase, momentarily shook the world-tested and empire-founding audacity of Porphyro. To pluck the lily was not then so easy—albeit it had so slight a stem, and frail a blossom. He had to follow her, for she walked on rapidly. And though in his first youth he had dreamed, his dreams were numbered—the last approached its dissolution. He was wide awake enough to perceive precisely the path they took; a void and silent path through a delicate and quivering shade. Incomprehensible was her treatment; yet he could not complain, for where she took him, thither she also went. It was to the convent, and she gave him no rest nor satisfaction until the door of her own chamber was closed, and they within it. Never had Porphyro's nerves received a shock at once so subtle and so violent; the change from

the dazzling show which lately framed him as its idea, to the colourless and almost grim seclusion round him *now*, was not so stunning as the difference between his late certainty of success in love, and his present depression of that conviction—to what was actually, though he refused himself so to recognise it—despair.

"Sit down, pray," said Adelaída, kindly but very calmly; "you must be fatigued. Indeed, it is a pity you took the trouble to *come*; a written reply would have sufficed."

"How can you—I had almost said, how dare you—meet me thus! I come to bestow what you have so long deserved—what so long I yearned to give you. I have filled the world with my name; I am at last, not worthy, but as worthy as one so unworthy ever *could* be—of your love."

She recoiled step by step, for step by step he pressed towards her. Anger had rekindled his smothered love; its splendours lit the faded sea-hue of his eyes, and pride frowned darkly pallid from his forehead. Two such passions never struggled in embrace so close, so strong—one must destroy the other, or both die.

At last she touched the wall of the narrow

room. Still he advanced, and with a gesture at once supplicating and imperious, stretched out his hands. They fell upon her robe and glided down its folds, for her hands were close gathered to her bosom. At his touch upon her raiment she shook it, removing her hands for the purpose—then crossed them as before. At that sign of what he thought to be a super-refined coquetry of action, he fell back to the opposite corner.

"Strange conduct—strange reply!" she said, "whether meant as assent or negative to my request."

"Nor do I understand," he answered, and sudden dejection struck through his voice. The painful accent called upon her vast benevolence —she had not meant to hurt a *man*, only to keep a *lover* from her presence.

"Forgive me, I was perhaps ungrateful, for it was good of you to come. I grant you have many rights to be displeased. But you, who are so generous, remember *mine*."

"Yours—your rights? Ah, brightest, who remembers them as I? Am I not here to protect them in protecting you?"

"Peace, peace!" Her spirit rose again. "Must

I remind you, that I—whom as a woman you have neither understood, nor treated with consideration—that I did not address you in a strain to deserve *this* response. That I asked you a question concerning a state-secret between us—a state-secret between two sovereigns, not between a woman and a man."

Porphyro changed from pallor to a wanness in which withered the last tint of life. His eyes were dropped—but not with the old crafty fascination. Adelaída had to call all her courage from her virgin conscience in order to carry on the interview, so deeply did it pain her to see that look, which, if not shame, was pride in closest contact with it — "high places made low."

"Listen," she said in a gentle voice, that was yet cold as icicles that drop on the impenetrable marble. "I do believe you are a great man; you are, in comparison with most old rulers and *all* the rulers of this age, a good man. But there was a time when I thought you best of all in every age—I thought you perfect. Ah, well have I been punished! You knew it: you also knew that you made me unhappy, else your face would not change, your eyes would not lower, in my

sight, weak creature that I am, and full of faults. You knew I was unhappy, and you let me suffer."

"I suffered myself," said Porphyro, simply, brought down to strict fact by her plain-speaking; how impossible, if she still loved him, how unlike her when she *did!*

"I knew it. Stay!—I throw myself on your generosity; for no woman, perhaps, ever spoke so freely to a man before. That is scarcely my fault, however; for I was afraid once to whisper in your presence, lest I should displease you. Yes, I thought you *perfect* then."

"Is any perfect upon earth?" asked Porphyro, pointedly; but the point was blunt—the weapon uselessly recoiled.

"There is one individual, whose circumstances, if not himself, have attained, in his own eyes, perfection. I am sure, at least, that half-an-hour ago he thought so—that he thought, before God and man, he had realised a perfect destiny. And a man's circumstances are always set down to his character, by men; just as chance is God to most of them. After saying so much, may I speak further?"

"Speak always, even if to torture me." And,

to do him justice, he looked as if his pride, if not his love, was racked.

"I wrote to you ingenuously, trustingly—not as a woman. That, however, I have said before. I addressed your honour and your intellect. I wished to give you something, which would enable you to benefit mankind. Little knew I how enormously you had benefited by *men*. I desired you to accept my kingdom, which, small as it is, I am unfit to govern—to wear my crown, which, light and little as it is, is too heavy with responsibility for me to wear. And how do you reply? —how do you venture to come, unbidden?"

"Adelaída!"

"Yes, unbidden? Do you think I am a woman to beckon a man to my hand; or to wish a man near my heart, when he has divided himself from that suffering which all life has been my life? Should I have invited you?—did I not rather *command?* And did my heart *sound* in my invitation? Are you too modest inwardly, despite your outletting pride, to *take* my meaning: that my conscience, not my heart, had written your name on its fair face, as fair as it? I knew how you could govern; and I would have had you, as I would have you still, include my

poor section of misguided and tormented humanity under your great direction and strong control. I knew not then what you had further taken for yourself—*wasted* at your subjects' expense."

Porphyro was alarmed; he had only read women in their common cipher; this *character*, his passion, in adoring its fleshy tabernacle, had overlooked.

"Surely," he remonstrated, "you do not treat me thus, because I have earned—what I might say, if any might, that I deserve—a crown."

"Did I did not entreat you to attend?—to bear with me? I have gone from my meaning, but, indeed, I am bewildered and unhappy. In losing you, I lost much, Porphyro."

"But I come to claim you—to give myself—"

"Silence!" she answered, thrillingly. "Will you never understand? Do you think I am a person to waste words vaguely?—to torture myself besides for wilfulness?"

"At once—only once, hear me plainly," he broke in, actually at once too literal and too impassioned to believe she was sincere in her retreat, and too ignorant to apprehend rightly what she hinted. "At once, I offer you my crown, my hand, my love; will you take them? Answer

me, and quickly, for, hard as you think me, I tremble."

He really trembled; never before had she given him credit for that sign of weakness strong men disdain themselves for, but all women honour in them.

"I am truly sorry that you ask me; you might have spared—I wished you to spare us both. I cannot marry you."

Porphyro had been shot at in the streets three times, and never started; had philosophised twice in prison, when sent there *for life*; had speculated forty years on the possible reversion to him of an old, old doom, by all but himself deemed dead, and at last realised it. He had, in fact, received so many shocks with so much calmness, that he met this blow worthily—that is, as becomes a worldly man, whose dignity is a jewel even dearer to him than his honour.

"I am sorry," he replied, and ceased trembling in her sight by a mighty effort, which drove his passion inwards, and for ever. "You would have been the ornament of the throne—the best crown of the empire; I say nothing of myself, my complaint is not for your ears, as my affliction cannot touch your heart."

"You shall not assume misconception. I loved you when I saw you—you made me love you; I had none else to love, and Nature had for me no soul, for then none of her children loved me. You asked, more wooingly than in words, for my love. I gave it freely. Then you received it without response; it was *so* you treated a virtuous woman, as if she had thrust herself on your notice publicly. You drew out my whole heart, as the sun opens a flower to himself, and then your icebolt withered it."

Porphyro was aghast. It is not too much to say, that through her vivid representation of what a less chaste woman would have concealed, he first caught a glimpse of his own error. Irreparable now! For the pain and shame she had perceived at first came not from a cause she suspected, but from one less noble and less manly, if more admirable in the world's wide shallow gaze. He had felt *pained*, because she bent not to him as of old, she no longer *adored* him, and he loved adoration; he could no longer master her, she controlled herself. But he had felt *ashamed*, because he had deceived her in his designs from the beginning, and had wrought the deception to make way for himself to escape from her contempt,

in case he failed. If she knew not he had aspired to a crown, she would neither pity nor despise him for not attaining it. But now, what had been his error, or what *felt* he his error now? He had not loved *enough;* his love had not been strong enough, nor all-sufficient to direct his passion rightly; he relied too much upon her faith, a thing so frail and fleeting in a woman who is loved with *less* than a man's whole power; though in her, beloved to the utmost and honourably worshipped, the faith is a thing eternal and of eternal freshness.

Still, it was not in Porphyro to convict *himself* of this error, even felt, unconvicted by her; nor was it in him to give up directly; he too ardently desired success in this his scheme, for it was a scheme in which other hopes were concerned than those alone of love.

"You will, at least, explain to me the reason. Is it simply because I have attained supremacy, whose sign you do not recognise as one of which I forewarned you? Or is it because I delayed my hopes, you punish me?—because I esteemed myself, in my mere person and character, unworthy of yours? If I mistook, have not great men mistaken? Were not women the first to pardon —the last to punish such?"

"To pardon—to punish!—how dare you so address me? To *punish*—above all, to punish one who has injured me, is not my way. And one who has not injured me, how shall I even *pardon?* If you will be told, you shall hear. Heaven is my witness, I would have avoided both. I wrote to you on purpose. I might have said it was because you deceived me; there was a time when it would have been the truth; and though hard it would have been to myself to refuse you then, I would have done it. I might also have averred it was because you kept me in suspense; for long and long was the loneliness you had created for me in making my heart need you. But not these reasons together now suffice; they are but a part of the truth, and not its essence. I, too, have erred, and I confess it. I have swerved from faith in you. But I wish not to add hypocrisy to natural failing. I wish to be honest, and tell you that I dare not marry you, because I no longer love you. This is the real, and should be the only reason."

There was silence—she hoped he would not break it; she hoped he would depart. She turned from him to the window sill, and the light fell on every line of her face—no shade was there.

He came a little forward to examine it, to find if there were but a *shade* of pity, or ray of fond regret. And he saw how soft, yet grave, was the expression — the glance heaven-directed, filled with what seemed quenchless, if it were tearless, melancholy. So, like a person at once passionate and perverse, he would not give up hope because she bade him, while yet she showed herself unhappy in the least degree, if far, far happier than himself. Rather, in such a nature, hope, stricken from its near summit of certainty, prevailed too lowly, too prayerfully in self-revenge; and pride could prevail no longer against the selfishness, which, in that hour, revenged itself on *her* because she could not gratify it.

"It is cruel—cruel—and cruellest, because so utterly unlike you—you have torn your own image, like that of an angel, from its shrine,—never again shall I so behold you, unhappy that I am! Unlike you, as I knew you, and adored you, to dash the cup from thirsty lips! And to judge hardly, harshly, bitterly, is more unlike you. You did not so judge the dead, whom in life you could not honour. You did not so judge the murderer, whose escape you sealed with your free permission—nor the innocent, who died too soon

for you to save, and whose sanctified memory you have written saintlier than any canonisation."

All the world by this time knew the story of the innocent who had suffered, and the guilty who had gone free, nameless the latter, the former blazoned everywhere, as on a pure white stone.

"You have broken my heart—you have crushed my pride—you have stoned to death my happiness—and under it my usefulness will be buried; how can I labour the dry length of life, uncomforted — alone?" He continued bitterly;— "You will be answerable for my errors, for you alone could convict me of them, could destroy them, could charm my being from the growth of fresh ones. Waste, wild, and overrun with weeds, will be my pathway now . . . It would have bloomed a garden, whose increase would have blessed humanity to farthest time; its flowers would have sprung beneath your smiles, its fruits your presence would have ripened in me. For your smile is all the encouragement after which I languish; your frown alone is condemnation to me . . . A tear shed on my bosom would have melted my heart to all mine enemies, and a kiss have sealed my peace with the whole world.

Now my sceptre shall be a rod of iron, my crown shall not be colder or more sunless than the surface of my soul presented to the universe.—And for this you have lived—you, a weak and tender woman; shelterless; unprotected; and alone. Yes, alone—as I."

No need for the failing voice, the smothered sigh, the retreat still hastier, yet farther, towards the door. His words had done the work; they were forged like *acts* in the brain, to do. At first threatening almost, and then wholly subdued; in both cases, their power came from the soft soft voice, whose pathos was won from *will* —not from nature overbrimmed with inward tears and fainting in supplication. Poor girl, poor woman, late-loving, but now beloved! here struck Porphyro a bolder stroke, disguising its double edge and chilling mettle, with the tenderness that breathed on both a mist too soft for tears, yet containing the soul of tears, as white mist of the morning holds the dew. . . . .

Had she been selfish? had she studied her own pride, petted her own heart, too much? spiritualised her aspirations too highly? And he suffered. He had deceived her, had tortured her faith with needless trial, but still he loved

her. Faithful, when she had fallen from faith. . . . . What mattered it, if she married him? none would guess her secret history, and he who had contemplated her defection towards him, was now—in the moment of sharpest test—right ready to forgive it, and receive her, in face of the whole world, his wife. . . . Of what use to that world, alone and crownless, could she be? And now, if through her he went astray?

Now this mood was no contemptible decline in resolve from weakness moral, nor sentimental excitation of the sex; she was incapable of either. But he had done the best for himself, in representing himself as dependent on her in the least and lowest degree. Never was woman in so lone a plight—without parents, or fraternal friends or sisters. The last of a race extinct, if she died childless, and unnoticed in history, if she died unmarried; these two facts might have driven another woman straight into the shelter and recognised honour of matrimony. But they would have deterred *her*. Still to be alone—to have no bosom friend nor life-enwoven intimate. Above all, to be of use—to aid another—another who yearned for her as *companion* more than

mistress; to be represented—to be believed. Never had her happiness, her safety, nor her real value as an individual, been in such danger. She turned suddenly, deeply-touched and truthfully, by all the conflicting impressions of her soul, her conscience, and her mind: not her heart, that beat still and changeless under all. She beheld a countenance which had once attracted, and now as physically repelled her; it was stamped with stern depression, fast cooling down, like iron lately hot, to a determinate and endurant hardness;—should that iron enter his soul at her pleasure, and for her pleasure only?

Porphyro, without looking, saw his advantage, and took advantage of it;—what lover, whose whole aim is earthly, would not? He advanced towards her; he lingered in advancing, she trembled, but no longer shrunk away. Her eyes filled with a sudden dew, which she had not thought would swell —she only felt the swelling at her inmost heart —the yearning for another *too* far away, whom nature, true to herself, would yearn for in the place of one too near. And the tears saved her, for she would not have *this* one behold them, nor offer to wipe them from her eyes. She raised her hand, which in another instant she might

have outstretched towards him, eternally beyond recall. She raised it to her eyes, and covered them, and longed out of the sudden darkness for some other Light than light.

While doing so there came an answer, a soft and nearly noiseless rustle, lower than the south wind's summer breath, stiller than the shiver of the air through the tops of the long grass, withal as palpable as each, and more *living* than both together. In a moment more, the sound passed into a touch—a touch ineffable, without pressure or detention, least like human fingers, and imparting no hint of human presence. She snatched her hand away—she looked; and through the dim rainbow twinkle of the suppressed tear-drops, she beheld her carrier dove. The darling of her regrets, the idol of her longings, had returned—and not too late—

—Except for itself!—The constant, aspiring creature, who shall name it soulless? Except for itself—too late for *it*—it had touched her hand, in token of faith fulfilled unto the end, and faith's farewell, then fallen on her bosom. It would have fallen *lower*—its impulse was extinct—but that she caught it, and pressed its beak to her living lips, and tried to breathe into it, and held its feet in

her warm palm in vain; relaxed and chill, they took no hold. Too long had been its way across the airy wilderness, and weariness had spent itself to death. Its eyes, whose brilliant circles had expressed a love that shamed all human tenderness, whose glance fixed on one far point unseen, had surpassed all human constancy, had dropped under a dull film. It had won its rest, and earned it. Ah, that our rest might be won from our desert, and earned so well, sweet dove!

Over no human grave had Adelaída ever wept, no death she had ever mourned. But now she felt as though, in naming herself friendless and forlorn, she had overlooked a treasure, a friend, a sister, or a soul who loved her best. Her tears burst forth without control. Porphyro's presence was neither preventive nor restraint. Over the soft dead thing she wept such tears, as while he saw them, he jealously coveted. At that instant he felt as if he would die, so to be wept for by her; so lamented even for one short hour.

But his mood changed, when she untied a paper—only a slip of paper—beneath its wing. He had not expected that; he did not even identify the feathered angel as a carrier-pigeon;

in these days seldom sent except on errands of speechless or separated lovers.

"Few and short" were the words of the message for which she had (unconsciously) waited; yet they saved her—they came before the sacrifice she was about to make was offered. Offered—even if not accepted—had the sacrifice been, that message would have come too late.

It was but a slip—a scrap—and it carried only these expressions. "I have been mad once, and am going mad again, if they leave me here. I am not mad now, when I call on you to deliver me—to come to me; your presence alone can save me. And I ask no more." It was dated from the House of Health, at a certain town in northern Prussia; sufficient to guide her thither, though she knew not the direction nor the road.

Porphyro was not disinterested. He was even selfish, as we have shown. But on seeing her face—or its unspeakable change from misery to joy, as she opened and read the little note, his purpose changed, or rather turned to the temper he should have shown at first. Of course, he thought of a lover—that was to be expected; of course, he was jealous, therefore his pride rallied;

of course, he blamed the unknown for having ravished her love from him. And he would have blamed her if he could, but, to do him justice, he loved her too much not to desire her happiness; and once convinced that it depended on *another*, he was ready—almost willing—to give up his cause.

"A message from a friend?" he observed haughtily—he had meant to tone it humbly.

"From a friend in trouble," answered she, with real humility—which through love sounded proud.

* * * * * *

Next day, at the hour of noon, Belvidere learned the reason for which the extraordinary preparations had been made—the consummation of state accomplished in the council-chamber of the kingdom, before representatives gathered from every class; Adelaída—not renounced her rights—but made them over to another. Porphyro, standing at her side, accepted her gift in a short speech—the most heartily eloquent he ever made. He pledged himself to do his best for her people, and nobly redeemed his pledge. But those, who listening to the strong words of the Emperor of Iris, had known him as the

untitled and cosmopolitan Porphyro, remarked a pale languor in his countenance, a subtle air of self-reproach, and, above all, a steadfast melancholy, which had not belonged to him in those old iron days when Fate was barren for him, and the Heavens over his petition "as brass." Was it the golden doom that thus affected him with man's least earthly passion—gratitude—or a deeper mystery still, which none interpreted—charged with no golden happiness, nor treasure more precious than gold?

CHAPTER IX.

Had Rodomant been really mad? Did ever any, who had really been mad, confess it on his return to sanity? They say so—but like many questions of the school of medicine (dumb and deaf oracle to the million) it may be answered with more chance of touching near the truth, by the technically ignorant, than by the professionally taught. May not frenzy counterfeit be more terrible to its victim than real frenzy? seeing that, in the former case, the reason unwarped grasps the agony of the nerves with appreciation. And is it strange that common men misname them—honestly, through mistake of the awful nature duplicate, which *seems* identical? But it may be almost certainly asserted that of real madness, as of actual death, none give us evi-

dence in explanation. It seems in madness counterfeit—the insane condition of the nerves depressed or over-wrought—and which induces a perfect raving after sympathy and a tongue unchained in self-confessions, as it seems in trance—that counterfeit death which physicians tremble to announce, and cannot master, and from whose dread phase of suspension the wakened sleeper tells such strange sweet stories of what it has seen, and heard, and felt; the ecstacies, the music, the meeting of old friends in new bright homes. But they who were restored from death—real death—by miracle, of their experience gave no sign. Nor do the mad, restored.

The sternest apostle of the twelve orders parents not to provoke their children. A master of modern writers, who has a voice, thrillingly reminded parents—who expect all duty from their children—to fulfil at least first their own duty towards those they bare. But yet, with the misery which fills the earth through their injudiciousnesss, their injustice, their ignorance—parents are neither charged nor connected. In fact, in common cases of ordinary characters, the sufferings entailed on children after their first

infancy are, as it were, a part of educational discipline—wholesome of course, perhaps necessary, and it may be even kindly, as it tends to prepare them for the earthly discipline of experience, and the heavenly discipline of sorrow. Such characters in routine ordinarily survive the misunderstandings and mistreatments of their childhood, without injury to their moral constitutions, or check to their mental growth. But not so the exceptional, who in every estate and rank, the farther they be indrawn from general sympathy, and the less they resemble their routine companions, the less meet special sympathy—the more are distanced by the little competition of the *equal* crowd. Above all, in their homes, where they naturally expect tenderness and forbearance—those elements of sympathy—as their due, they cannot exact either, for, in the majority, they do not exist. The super-Spartan hardness and heart-defiance of parents towards their children results less from secretly indulged selfishness than from callous vanity—the old idea (fit to be exploded with bloody nursery horrors and blackest fables of the supreme evil) that the young *think* their elders fools, but the elder *know* the young to be so,

This conscienceless indifference to the life within, this heartless supervision of the life without, often and often seal premature development—always so delicate and so ardent—for quick disease—disease that kills. Happy, thrice happy, those who die—die to be numbered and glorified with the martyrdom of innocence. But most unhappy those, who, physically resistant, or strong-spirited sufficiently, survive—survive, to endure the blight of the intellect, that should have opened in perfection; the atony of the natural affections—the long life-sickness of the exhausted heart.

Rodomant had been one of those unlucky for their own comfort, if world-esteemed fortunate beings, a child of genius, with its peculiar faults and mysterious virtues, soaring strength and saddening weakness. From his childhood misunderstood, he had suffered less from mistreatment than from the loneliness engendered by it, and so far its result. But still, at times, his preoccupation with art, ever a healer, better than Nature, of *human* nature lacking human sympathy, had conquered suffering and dispelled loneliness. During the full health of the faculties pertaining to the imaginative mould, the

delicious freshness of young creation, sweeter than the freshness of youth or spring, he perceived not his own *want* of a parent's heart to sustain, rather than a parent's wisdom to instruct. But in alternative seasons, when the ideal lay hueless and spiritless round him, as a sky under universal cloud, he suffered negatively and dully, his pride would not give the suffering a name, and the sense of duty, which generally co-exists with innocence, prevailed too powerfully to allow him to trace the torment to its cause. Further than this, so long as his genius was new, and his senses were responsive to all impressions, his mother's narrow views and dry existence affected him not, any more than the valley mists obscure the vision and load the breath of the traveller springing nearest the mountain summit.

It was the most unfortunate thing that had ever happened to him, to be returned, as it were, on her hands—driven to dependence on her for feminine tenderness and care, just at the time when he had lost his most delicate and powerful sense — that whose closing was to such an organisation like blindness—total blindness of the soul. For light is indeed the only fitting analogy for sound, and they who are of music's

children love it better than common eyes love light.

More unfortunate was it yet, because by this time she had come to consider him of consequence, as he made money, and had lived in royal houses. She had boasted of him to her curious friends and ignorant acquaintance — not more ignorant than she, with more excuse. She had counted on freedom from earthly cares her whole life for the future, through his bounty, which she named her due, and esteemed as poor part-payment for parental kindness and innate merit.

And Rodomant, much like all generous natures, had wrought himself into a frame of filial hope —a weary, if unuttered, longing after rest—rest in which quietly to be let alone to suffer, and which he fancied must be fulfilled on that cold shrine—a loveless home. Her heart would surely open to him now, after long absence, returned in woe, which must be sacred to a mother, and her secret—hidden from all others upon earth. The woe was not only irreparable, but wrong darkened and sharpened it—his own wrong against himself. His conscience was tormented with the indiscretion which had drawn down that doom upon his head; he was not *born* so fated, at least such

was his persuasion, and through it he suffered doubly.

Had his mother received him—not to say with open arms, but with decent fondness—he would have cleared his conscience, and opened his whole heart out to her—injudiciously, of course, but impulsively, and even gratefully—grateful for a friend between whom and himself (intercepted by fleshly ties) pride need not thrust its barriers.

But she was amazed—she was vexed—she was, most of all, cold and hard. She showed more stupid than he had deemed her; he had been of late with a woman the wisest of her sex. She *showed* stupid, for he could not hear her voice; and her face—which grim disappointment darkened—her face was as the face of a stranger. From that moment, he repudiated explanation; above all, he resolved to conceal from her his infirmity. There was, then, but one alternative, to seem dumb; for as he could not hear, how without self-betrayal should he answer?

The very night of his arrival—aggravated to her specially, because he had come in a private royal carriage, which had gone away without him, thus assuring her he had come, not to visit, but to live or stay;—that same night Rodomant,

driven on by the last hope that merges in despair, went to a physician hard by, who had known him, and pronounced in childhood upon his "irritable genius." To him, under seal, or rather absolute oath, of secrecy, he confided his cause of torment, and submitted for examination without a murmur. Baffled completely—for he could detect no flaw nor organic defection—this physician called on another, specially and solely devoted to the sense of hearing, and somewhat arrogant in his pretensions to inevitable cure. He, too, was baffled; but he left behind his stricter and more intricate search greater mischief than he found. The nerves, neutrally deadened before, were touched now into living torture, whose vibrations, of stronger agony than pain, seemed to sting and gnaw the very centre of sensation.

Rodomant raved at them both, then flung their fees in their faces, and rushed out of the house, and straightway sank into a mood of gloom and heaviness which might be felt—a silent and mortal-daunting mood; he never raised his eyes, he never spoke, scarce ever moved, and hardly ever ate; worst of all for himself, he never slept; condemned all hours of the day and darkness at once to hear no hint of the lost

music, to catch no echo from the breathing world, and to listen to a roaring inwards as of a sea that whelmed his brain.

Superstitious to the last and in the lowest degree, and afraid—as all the superstitious are—of insanity in every form, also like the illiterate and unfeeling together, apt to connect every unknown and unusual symptom of sickness or behaviour with insanity, the mother took her course according to her creed of ignorance and mock ideas of duty. Directly he had come home, that very night while he was in bed, she possessed herself of all the money he had brought, and hid it for her future use.

But a few days afterwards, she communicated in person with the charitable committee of a free asylum in the next town—not her native one, in which she lived,—and obtained leave for him to be examined, in process towards admission, in case he proved insane.

All honour to the jury of sane-said minds who sat in judgment upon his. Certainly Rodomant scowled upon them as they approached, the very image of a dumb madman, and when they attempted to handle him resisted and beat them back, in likeness of a strong madman too. His

pulse tearingly rapid, thrillingly high—his head burning, as if covered with a red-hot iron plate on the "region of the brain,"—above all, dumb—determinately dumb—though not born so. Proof this last of mania rather than strict madness, as the blood-excitation was one proof of *that.*

It so happened, therefore, that he was removed by force—proof additional and conclusive. Would a sane man struggle against captivity of the *will* by his brother men? Of course not,—he would go sanely, and sanely argue out his sanity. But ferocious as he was on the road, despair met him at the threshold of the asylum—that house of health—and chained him strong as iron on every joint, and calmed him like the snow-sleep freezing fast the limbs to death. Again examined within the walls, he was quiet enough, spirit-spent enough, to be pronounced harmless, to him a worse curse than had he been named dangerous or desperate, for it entailed on him the necessity of contact with those actually mad, both those who were reckoned harmless like himself, and those who had not *always* been so, but were now reclaimed from the sharper discipline which had fined down the character of their frenzy. And if anything could have maddened him, that

contact would. It certainly drove him desperate in his own consciousness, and made him dangerous to himself. His flesh crept, his soul revolted from those strange faces with all their warped expressions—the sidelong glances, the furtive leers, the grins without mirth, the sighs without sorrow, here and there the spectacle of the rabid instinct, gagged and starved, or the saddest of all wandering dooms—the melancholy mad. The hideous yearning at last came over him to imitate them, to mock their grimaces, their gestures,—to cower like them under the master-keeper's eye. And all night they played before his sleepless eyes on the dark wall of his cell,—lay a sick and dreary incubus upon his dreamless brain.

At last, controlled by others, when he should have controlled himself alone, his control grew languid and sank,—gave way; he cared no longer to maintain it. The nerve-life, strained to its extremest tension, snapped and failed. What seemed a collapse of the faculties in the annihilation of the will, and which was, in fact, the *semblance* of madness, followed. Then followed *treatment*, instead of simple control and vigilance.

What was deemed and doctored as his monomania still remained in form of silence; that is,

he would not speak. But while he tore his hair and rent his dress, he uttered cries like the screams of the dumb, which rent the ears of those who heard them, for he heard them not.

Now, the discipline of the asylum shared the age's enlightenment and reform—it owned no torture-chamber, nor chain, nor whip; but it was a charitable and a free asylum, and contained a thousand inmates. How should the idiosyncrasies of *all* be studied, any more than those of sane children in a charity or free school? They were, like these latter, humanely considered *in the mass*, but *individuals* were unknown among them. The God-smitten, numbered in heaven, were victims unnumbered upon earth.

They kept Rodomant in the darkness during that paroxysm, to rest his brain, and in solitude, that he might not excite others. Want of hearing had *felt* like darkness before, but real darkness was super-added now. At last, light fare, and frequent fasting from *that*, brought him physically low, and the mental torment passing into the weakness of the flesh, decayed. He was therefore released from darkness, but still not permitted to mingle in the crowd of wandering

reasons—well for him. This being a humane institution, innocent recreations were permitted, even innocent whims indulged. Rodomant, for instance, had not been deprived of his bird; indeed, he would have fought for it to the death, and none could have laid a finger on it without actual danger; but it had been used to darkness, as all trained members of its order are, and suffered nothing from it. Sane enough, in his nervous extremity, to be afraid of doing it harm, he never touched it all that time; it sat on the perch of its large cage in a corner, and as it is called in bird-fanciers' jargon, moped; in reality, that which it had in place of a soul, pined after the soul that had cherished it. After his release from darkness, Rodomant treated it as of old—kept it in his bosom, and fed it from his hand. No idea of making use of it struck him then, for loss of personal freedom at first affected him as with the sense of death—living burial, withal—total and necessary separation from the living *free*.

The bird drooped; but Rodomant had never seen it in its joyous and vivid mood—that spiritedness which birds certainly possess, *if* without souls—therefore, he feared not for it; and

he chose not to notice it more than was necessary, because of its connection with her. But once re-accustomed to the light, and thankful, if not glad, to be alone, he craved to test his powers of composition, or to discover whether they were lost. He must, for that end, communicate with some one. It was not then to be thought of, for he was resolved as ever not to speak. There was even a charm to him in withholding his voice, because it seemed now all he could call his own, and master in secret possession. Idleness, however, was unendurable, and at last he brought himself to write—he had thought of it at first, and repudiated it—on the princess's tablet. He had put it into his hands at parting. His request (simple enough) for pens, ink, and paper was instantly granted, though he was watched awhile, and several of his first effusions were carried away to be examined. But, proved to be nothing but scribblings in musical notation, they were pronounced harmless as their author, upon whose disease they tended to throw no light. So spoke the committee; but had one of them chanced to be a profound musician, he might have traced the disease through all its phases metaphysical therein, even to its source; so inexorable was the science,

and so expressive the passion, of that his artistic pastime.

But Rodomant had written at first too vehemently, and the physical energy was spent too soon for his peace—for his patience. Now, for the first time, idealess, heart-sick, hopeless, he turned passively to Heaven, and saw, alas! a face between himself and Heaven, which made Heaven shrink to distance immeasurable and incredible—beyond his soul, his aim, his attainment. For he could not reach her—how Heaven, then, which *must* contain her?

He had no longer the right to love; at least, if he had been really mad, a fact he knew not that he doubted. Then, of course he did *not* love; he denied to himself the possibility; he *would* not, again he leaned upon his crushed and uselessly-suspended Will. And again it *yielded*, and he charged the weakness, his love's relenting, upon another—that other no human soul. On a bright morning, the bird, pined to thinness, which its soft down and delicate full plumage concealed, dashed suddenly—wildly—against the window, at that moment closed:—then flew round and round the room, uttering low calls—Rodomant heard not, though he watched its motions with amaze.

Next, exhausted, its heart panting through its whole frame, it perched upon his hand, surveying him with expressive, piteous glances—eyes that bemoaned its fate in looks more sad than tears. Then flew round the room again—and again beat its wings against the window. Lastly, came back to his hand, and fixed its eyes once more on his.

Rodomant correctly interpreted the bird's desire—but allowed not to himself that it bore the slightest resemblance to his own. He would not keep it captive—he had suffered too strongly in captivity. Long had been the bird's captivity—long even as his own. It should fly—it should go free. But for *it* to go free was to go home, happier than he and wiser in its heaven-given instinct;—it had *wings* and knew how to direct them in a path along a trackless way.

But, sending the bird without *message*, would it be recognized and received? Were there not in the winged world more thousands like it?—Was it not long, long since she had seen its eyes? What if she closed to it her window—refused to let the commissioned stranger enter? This was some of the nonsense of lovers' logic. Then there was more he uttered to his own heart;—if he wrote he must write the truth, he dared

not tell her lies; further, had she not commanded him to write in trouble—only in trouble,—and dared he disobey? Besides, there could be no harm in writing, and no danger, if he confined himself to strict complaint. She was most likely, besides, by this time married to Porphyro, and as a woman safe from him or any man;—this last false argument clenched design. For Rodomant no more believed that she had married Porphyro, than that she would turn the bird away from her window. This noncredence resulted not from any knowledge of Porphyro's imperial realisations, for he had neither read nor inquired for information, on his account (since leaving her). So, written with a trembling hand, and died with trembling fingers to the wing of its aerial Mercury, the complaint was sent. Wished back of course, directly it was too late for recall; and contemplated with sullen pride, as the sealed sign-manual of self-degradation.

Now, when Adelaída received that complaint, —the short, sharp, silent call out of torment unnatural, unspeakable, at length unbearable—it is not too much to say that she suffered agonies of conscience, as well as heart. She had never heard him describe or discuss his mother; but he had

ever named her with a simpler show of honour than he accorded to any in his speech, always saving herself alone. But like all noble children who have never known a mother, she thought a mother must be the sweetest and the safest friend —the surest comforter—the most judicious adviser, too. Even now she did not know, nor guess, how far his mother was to blame; but she must be to blame, if she had permitted others to claim the charge of him. Perhaps, however, she considered the mother had died suddenly; for her charity was boundlessly suggestive. *Then*, the whole blame belonged to her herself. She had let him go—alone, friendless, without *security* for his future. In fact, at the moment of his departure, she had erred, and that the first time in her life, through pride—a woman's divine, yet selfish, instinct to conceal her love in that last struggle: she had studied her own interest as a woman, not his as a human being. She had not dared to question the fact of his departure; she had not dared to hint at his detention, even for a while. And now she was doubly punished: his sufferings, past and irretrievable, faced her full,—dread spectres of substantial agonies endured by him in the power of others, and those others

—what might they not be? What dark secrets of the darkest prison-house of life might not scare his memory now, for ever, and cloud his genius for all time? She shrunk in thought from *that* view of the subject. But, besides, the brief message expressed only the wild and chained desire to be free; only demanded her to fulfil her promise—a promise given by herself, not extorted, nor even asked, by him. Not a sign of any passion but despair imbued it—not a word concealed the slightest hint of love. Her task was now set—to screen her love behind her human interest, and under patronage's frozen veil to hide her passion.

Rodomant's mother, having done her duty by him, sate at peace in her own house. She would even have said, could she have put her meaning into words, that a person possessing that dangerous, troublesome, and useless gift, called genius, was better in confinement, if humanely treated, even if not *mad*. She was an ignorant woman, weak in sex and spirits; he was watched and cared for by wise, religious men, well paid to do their work, and therefore sure to do it. It was all for the best—better than if he had remained at home in idleness—better than if he had re-

mained in full exposure to the temptations of the world.

She was, however, rather disconcerted when one day a travelling carriage stopped at her door, and a lady of commanding gestures and ineffable beauty made inquiries concerning her son. She read more than disapprobation—disgust, disdain, in those queenly looks; and the loving eyes flashed forth a lightning at her, which pierced through joints and marrow, and the hard wall of her heart, to conscience. But she was not rebuked, except in silence, and the terrors of the expressive eyes. The exact distance and direction gained, the lady went her way at full speed; but delight and dread surpassed it.

The mother had been, through all her fears, impressed with the gravity of the bright lady's dress; and it had alarmed her further, for she recognised the set religious costume, though it prevented her from forming impertinently-romantic or insultingly-rash conclusions. The costume she wore gained Adelaída entrance; without it she might have failed, for she carried no certificate from the committee, nor sign of any social rank. She was, according to her request, admitted as a visitor, and expressed a desire to see all over the

asylum. An officer and a nurse accompanied her. Much they marvelled at her slight and rapid survey, after the strong interest she expressed—at her soft, hurried steps—her breathless, low inquiries. Greater was their wonder, when they reached a certain door. "It is a dumb madman in there," explained the nurse pausing; "and he has been dangerous. He went mad on music, the doctors think, for he is always writing it, and tearing it to pieces again. Besides, the phrenologists felt his head, and the bump for *that* is largest—except self-esteem. Should you go in there? it would be better not; he is apt to take offence, above all at strangers, and has an awful way of looking, even when he does nothing worse. He had a bird—a pretty pigeon—when he came here, and then he would not let anyone touch it. But we think he has strangled and hidden it—perhaps eaten it; they have such tricks and fancies. We cannot find it, however—and yet, perhaps, it flew away."

But the visitor not only insisted on entering—she would go *alone*. A double golden handful won her the permission, which else had not been granted. And directly she entered, she bolted the door inside. She started when she saw him

first. For an instant—shorter than a breath—she knew him not. For his back was towards her, and one sign of mortal winter had fallen on his mortal spring. He was now indeed—

"A youth; with hoary hair."

But though he *heard* her not, he felt her even before she came. Her steps dropped on the silence of his being—listening alone, as it lived alone, for her—like echoes of unheard music, or kisses sweeter than all music, which the spirit in embracing long before the meeting in the flesh—gave back the Spirit for its *hope*. And he turned towards her a face shining clear with the *shadow* of the glory which gives light to the heaven of heavens. And stretched out helpless arms: token sufficient of humanity in the beloved, for the loving woman upon earth. Love's secrets, like those of death—are sacred; be they so untold.

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Diamid Albany,—not as he had desired nor expected,—received his reward. Few husbands would again have taken a wife, as he took Geraldine—to his bosom, to his heart, to his *life*, for all life. Without question, without reproach, without decline from devotion, without even change in the *method* of his tenderness. What indeed would it

have been to him of assurance, to be told, to have confessed to him what he already deemed he knew?—that as her love had faltered and her faith a season failed, he could *never* recover her heart. For this he believed, this bitterness steeped the sweet fountains of his life's first joy, and changed its flavour. She never knew it; for no bitterness had turned his LOVE, and that was given her freely—more freely than when she first gave hers. Then, why should he reproach her? Could she help it, if his love had failed to atisfy her of his truth? Too compassionately—too simply, out of unconscious pride—he *surveyed* her nature, for reproach to be reasonable in his eyes. How, either, could he change his manner, even to enhance his dignity? for he had once deceived her, *so she thought*, he would never apparently again deceive her. So his love—strong, pure, and deep as ever—fulfilled its every impulse, and was free. But none knew the secret of his impaired and melancholy happiness. He scarcely knew *himself* how much he suffered from the belief, to him fact, that Geraldine's love was not his wholly, albeit she had in faith returned. Possibly, had he revealed to her this his misbelief, she could never have succeeded in

convincing him it was false. As it *was*—for, in comparison with her love—her tenderness—her yearning over him *now*—her first young passion in its bud had been but prescient and imperfect. In this, her first full bloom of womanhood, she fancied herself to feel, as indeed she showed, more reserve towards her husband than in her *first marriage*. For Geraldine—poetess still in mind and heart, though never again in *deed*,—always named to herself her union in the first instance with Diamid and their subsequent reunion,—as though the former had been the marriage made on earth, the last the marriage fulfilled and finished—if not made—in Heaven. And the space between the two was as it were to her soul the gulf of death overpast, and *forgotten* in the peace of the paradise beyond attained:—as we may fondly and faithfully believe our own dark passage to the light shall be—*forgotten*, when we attain that light.

But that reserve of hers, which she attributed to her own unspeakable gratitude, and the things "by the ear unheard," as by the eye "unseen," pertaining to perfect marriage; mysteries, even so accomplished, but *secrets*, unless accomplished;—that reserve resulted in fact and only from the

woful episode] which was to her as the grave past through and no more remembered, but which to Diamid was an open and an empty grave, ever yawning dimly beneath his feet. She had left him once, might not she again leave him? For that first time she left him, he believed—how help it? that her heart had swerved. Alas, what right had he to expect that she should stay? He had (so he considered in himself) selfishly sought her love, and forced upon her his, too early, at an age when almost any child of ideal mind will respond to the prophecy of womanhood. And now—he believed, she remained with him because it was her duty, and even forced herself to take his love with smiles, to accept it without tears. Perhaps no person except a woman would have believed or could have understood that Geraldine had never, as a woman, loved Geraldi; and that she was as guileless of passion for him as she was instinct with pure affection. However, as Diamid never, even in their first meeting, alluded to Geraldi, Geraldine dared not. He refrained from fear of breathing on the scarce closed wound; she, from fear of feigning regret she did not feel. For never death of one so near in the dear affinity of blood, brought such full

repose to the survivor. Perhaps, also to the dead.

Thus it happened that on that subject there never was any explanation given nor asked,—both avoided it. But the difference between them in this instance was, that Geraldine, after a short spell of her new bliss, forgot the intervening anguish altogether, even to its remotest cause; while Diamid remembered it continually and ever, to the end of life. *Then* was the mystery made clear, with all the mysteries besides of love, of sorrow, and of death.

What, then, was his reward in *life?* That he, a soul, whose one temptation was the most earthly and the least sensual of all the passions, the only passion, it may indeed be said, which in no spiritualised form whatever, shall survive the grave,—resisted that temptation once for always, until the end. He repudiated his life's pursuit, and crushed to dust his idol for his love. He renounced his *hold* on fame, and consigned to oblivion what he had safely and fairly won.

Physicians ordained, and her obvious condition confirmed their ordinance, that Geraldine could not live, or that to tempt life there, would be to experience relapse, which must be fatal in a

northern, any northern climate. She was, therefore, to remain in Italy. Italy—to a man, like Albany! Yet there he remained with her. Italy, theme inexhaustive of poets exhausted, and pet paradise of idle lovers! For him a flower whose honey had been drained, a spring dried up, a changeless picture of one eternal dream. Yet there he remained for life, and so sealed her health, her comfort, and his own marriage vow, as well as her happiness, for truly she adored her home.

When he had left England on the receipt of her letter, that letter whose very length and full expressiveness deceived him, he had been on the point to realise the desire, long delayed, of his intellectual being, and of what he dearly esteemed besides his moral worth and public fitness. A vacancy had occurred, which, on his filling it, had raised him nearest the head of government; and in another month or two, that head-command, long coveted, would have been his own.

His departure from England, so sudden and inexplicable—his non-return;—entailed on him the inevitable suspicion of incompetence, with which the incompetent and vain love to charge the competent and proud. Even his best friends disliked, contemned, and spurned him in his

retreat, and their partial verdict crowned the decision of the crowd. He had *failed* at the crisis of political probation, and all his earthly labours went for nothing.

More fruitful blessings than fame bestows were given him in his solitude, and made life's garden blossom like the rose. But the ambitious—the best-hearted of such—are ever ambitious for their children; thus his melancholy became tinctured with that of "hope," as well as that of "resignation." He was, as far as man can be, a faultless father, Geraldine as faultless, as a mother. Their children certainly reaped joy and early instilled knowledge from the past sorrows of both their parents, and the faults of *one*. Never were children so gay and fair, so winning, and so wise. Their father devoted his life to their education, and with them their mother learned.

Neither was that great gift of offspring the exceeding great reward. If his name faded in his own lifetime, and in sight of his own yearning eyes, from fame's wan scroll, whose brightest record oblivion gathers to its dust of six thousand years at last,—it was written on a page unturned by man, a fair white stone which bears

eternal testimony to all Sacrifice, the least and greatest, if sincere.

. . . Lady Delucy reached Calcutta before her child, by what was almost a miracle of speed and self-denial, for she had not paused an instant on the voyage; and when Elisabeth arrived herself, mind-weary, worn in frame, and almost exhausted with anticipation—only not sick at heart, nor failing in love's own courage—she found herself in her mother's arms. The surprise was forgotten in the surpassing joy, the comfort ineffable, the speechless sense of rest. Elisabeth had much to learn after that, and her voyage had been a kindly induction to the rapid changes, and often rougher phases of her life. For a time, her mother, remaining with her and her husband, hoped to take them back with her to England, but in short while Lyonhart, from being a commander of armies, became also a governor of peace—an heroic fixture in that land, whose undeciphered characters he first attempted to explain to others—to themselves—and was certainly the first to learn himself. And Elisabeth, happy as she was, glorified in his supreme devotion,—yet, womanlike, preferred infinitely to share personally the rigours of his position

abroad than to enjoy his society and his love, entrenched in the calm of her useless rank, at home; nor did she ever try, in the moment most dangerous or critical, to entice him from his duty.

Her mother returned to England with her child's first child, then two years old, and there awaited the fresh arrival of other children year by year. As she never parted from them—as she doated on them—and as though born under the tropics, they were children, one and all, of blood heroic and boundless spirit, she experienced one loss in gaining them. Hundreds of happy days —years of happiness as she enjoyed through them, and they through her, she never had a *quiet* hour in her after-life.

And the greatest of all the excitements which ever befell her after her return to England, was a journey she took to visit a certain deaf musician and his sweet wife in Germany. The wife framed and sent the invitation, *he* would never have invited any one, last of all his first fair patron. But Adelaída, who had insisted on receiving all details of his life before she knew him, and had traced his artistic experience through every line and shade, had learned,

without commenting to him upon it, the inestimable kindness with which one of her own sex had blessed her husband in his sore need. Directly she ascertained that benefactress to be in England, she longed at once to express her own gratitude in person, and to see the woman, who — without loving him — had fostered his genius in its strong and struggling infancy— without whose care, it or its possessor with it, might have prematurely perished. Probably she also desired that the lady should meet her husband in his full and bright renown—a renown he cared for absolutely nothing ever since it had been compassed and retained. Now she could not have wished to re-introduce him on account of any improvement in his grace or gallantry, for he had made no way in either,—he had rather declined in both. Surly to strangers—incomprehensible to friends—for admirers impracticable —grotesque as in his unformed youth, and five hundred times more difficult to influence: he received Lady Delucy like a fresh foe rather than a friend of old; but it was not because he lacked feeling, it was because he felt too much. His wife however made amends for his behaviour, for his proud speechless gratitude, and his iron in-

difference towards all women but herself; with her fadeless beauty, her exquisite wit, her exhaustless tact. But it was also true, that, except to him, her heart and her love were sealed. Lady Delucy never knew how—nor whether really, after all, Rodomant had betrayed her secret. Such small secrets, which go to make up the sum of great ones, are seldom—except in books—explained on earth.

He had not to work for bread. His wife had taken care of that. Too tenderly she tortured herself with the infirmity that harassed his flesh, and which he never conquered—even in spirit—the triumph of the wife lay in that fact, for, never amiable in his existence, his restless temper had turned to moody now. He adored her—but frequently tormented her—she loved him all the more. To her only he complained—raved—condemned the decree of fate, which he deemed not ever that of Heaven. And the more she suffered on his account, the more she loved him still. But would not have done so, but for her knowledge—the knowledge a woman never misses—of his unchanging love. Lady Delucy wondered somewhat at their marriage, over which she yet rejoiced. But she never saw them when *alone* together.

He was not enforced to work for bread, because Adelaída, in renouncing with her earthly rank, her worldly influence, and all her cares; had retained a small but rich estate, out of the scale of royal possessions, which had belonged to her own mother by right. Its products sufficed for both of them, for they were equally temperate, equally unworldly, and both luxurious alike only in charity, in music, and in love. * * *

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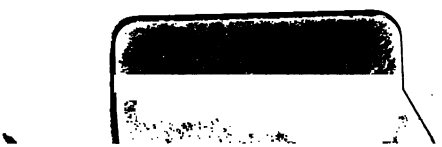
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